

BEGIN READING OUR GRAND WAR STORY TO-DAY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
G. ARTHUR PEARSON

(OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 476.

FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 12TH, 1898.

[ONE PENNY.]

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SHORT STORIES

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No. 476.]

For the Week ending February 12th, 1898.

[ONE PENNY.]

THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.



SUMMARY.

YEN HOW, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own.

CHAPTER III.

RUMOURS OF WAR.

As the year wore on, some of the International difficulties centreing round Kiao-Chau, Port Arthur, and Hainan reopened. In England, more than all the old unrest revived.

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What added to this unrest was the fact that some of the items of news were quite inexplicable.

From the beginning of the year it had been known that Germany had not made so brilliant a bargain in the acquisition of Kiao-Chau as she had imagined. The territory placed under her "sovereign rights" had been strictly limited by China, and granted only as a "lease." When Prince Henry of Prussia arrived with the *Deutschland* and the *Gefion*, he found that there were no "laurels" to win, and nobody at whom to strike out with his mailed fist.

What, then, was the surprise of the world, including the Germans themselves, when, in the middle of October, came the news that China had ceded a large additional region to the Kaiser, absolutely without conditions!

There was not a single brain in Europe which could divine the motive of this virtual gift.

At this time, Li Hung Chang, recalled to power by the Emperor at the beginning of the year, was still at the head of affairs in Peking. But in the short space of a few months he had acquired the habit of taking no step without the suggestion and advice of that new element in Chinese politics, that far-seeing Oriental-European, that much-toiling member of the *Tsung-li-Yamen*, the omniscient Yen How. Already Yen had swung himself up into the position of the virtual ruler of China.

Yen How seemed to Li Hung Chang, haunted as the old statesman had always been by the vision of dismemberment and downfall which overhung China, something like an angel of light. Here was another brain which saw as his had all along seen—only far more clearly, and with powers of invention far vaster than his own to avert the catastrophe.

"Let us be definite," Yen had said, in words which old Li long remembered, one night as they smoked together alone on a moonlit veranda. "Do let us be honest with ourselves, your Excellency! You agree with me that the yellow man is doomed—if the white man is not: in your heart you think it. Then let us say it in definite words; for as soon as ever we have said it, we have gone half way toward grappling with our fate."

"Ah, I have said it often and often," answered Li, "but to what good?"

"If you believe that now is the time for action, as I do, your Excellency, you have the matter in your own hand."

"How so?"

"To me it is clearer than the moonlight there. The facts of the situation seem to stare me in the face."

"Speak, Yen How."

"I will speak, your Excellency. To me it seems that if we could supply a motive to the combined Japanese and Chinese nations to traverse in their millions Asia and the Urals, and then to overrun the Europe of to-day, there is no power on earth that could permanently check the overwhelming momentum of their progress."

"It is nonsense, my son," said Li, with a pull at his long metal pipe.

"Note this," replied Yen—"I only say that I believe—for who can be sure? The white man is strong and stern; his frown is dreadful. When he thunders through his throat of iron, who can endure it? I only say that I believe—though an army of four hundred millions cannot be mown



There was a brief consultation on board the *Majestic*.

down in a day, your Excellency. The throats of the Maxims might grow hoarse and burst at this stupendous task. Still, perhaps you are right—perhaps I talk nonsense. I did not seriously mean to propose a march against the Maxim thunder. But I have a thought—a thought. Suppose China and Japan can take away the Maxims first, and then march afterwards."

"Speak your meaning, Yen How," said Li; "all is dark to me."

"We wish the white races killed," answered Yen; "well, there are two ways, are there not? We might kill them ourselves—that you say is nonsense. The other way is to get them to kill one another."

At these words Li's pipe came slowly from his mouth, and the outer corners of his eyes screwed up into an expression of the most exquisite enjoyment. He had come into sudden contact with—a New Thought.

"What is left alive of them after their mutual slaughter," Yen How went on, "we can kill. Their lands will be weak with loss of blood, their treasures will be exhausted—there will be no Maxims there any more."

At these last words his own eyes, too, wrinkled up into a net of delicious merriment.

"The trump card is in the hand of China," he said.

How the white races were to be made to destroy one another Li never asked, though the conversation lasted far into the night. He knew well. That, at least, was simple enough.

"England," said Yen as they parted, "England—she is the worst. All the others against her."

A few weeks afterwards the cession of large additional territories in China to Germany was rumoured.

And now followed, in rapid succession, a series of the most startling, the most inexplicable reports.

It seemed as if China were not waiting for dismemberment from abroad, but was dismembering herself wilfully, with precipitate frenzy.

First came the intelligence that France had been besought by the Chinese Government to assume the Protectorate, without conditions, of Hainan and Yun-nan.

These few lines of telegram threw Europe into a state of fever. It was decided by everyone that, if the intelligence were true, no earthly consideration of risk would keep the rapacious hand of the Frenchman from grasping at this rich plum.

In a week or so it was definitely known that the news was true, and that France had accepted the offer. Rumours of war filled the air. The world was a-gog, and every spot was an arena for discussion. Only one man was silent—Lord Salisbury. The newspapers besought him to speak, if only a word; but still he remained wrapped in his mantle of taciturnity. A deputation of merchants waited upon the Under-Secretary; but he answered them only with a few strong words of hope.

At this time Yen How's name got into the papers. It was said that this mysterious man, whose dazzling rise in the Celestial Empire was sketched, had recently taken a fresh journey to Tokio. Then a vague telegram, printed in England in small *nonpareil* type, appeared, stating that the probable object of Yen How's renewed journey was to conclude a secret treaty, offensive and defensive, between China and Japan. But the report was unsubstantiated and not believed.

The real bomb was yet to burst into the midst of Europe. It was hurled by the Petersburg correspondent of the *Daily News*.

China had offered to Russia the protectorate of the Yangtse Valley.

It was now, for the first time, that it entered two or three of the shrewdest heads in Europe that China was deliberately seeking to plunge the world into war by working upon the rapacity and selfish greed of the various nations.

One gentleman, a private and unknown citizen, living at a country house in Hampshire, wrote to the *Times* to this effect. But his letter attracted no attention. The few who read it were inclined to regard it as far-fetched.

Yet, looking back now, it seems strange that the same idea did not occur to many others. For it must be remembered that the Yangtse Valley had always been regarded as peculiarly the sphere of British power in China. More than this, toward the early part of the year Britain had governmentally guaranteed the Chinese loan of sixteen millions sterling, and it was agreed that the security for this should consist of the land-tax and the unplighted part of the Customs dues. Now, the chief source of both land-tax and Customs dues was the Yangtse Valley.

Yet the next day the Russian *Novosti* published an evidently-inspired article, stating that on no account would Russia withdraw from the prominent place into which events had forced her in the East.

The feeling in England was one of horror at the blind and criminal cupidity of the Continental nations. The word "War" was on every tongue. Twice in one day there were hurried meetings of the Cabinet. Thousands upon thousands of private letters poured in upon the Foreign Office, urging patience and firmness.

But the hand of Lord Salisbury was forced in an unexpected manner.

Two items of news followed each other rapidly.

First, that on the 21st day of the 12th moon of the 24th year of Kuang Hsü—that is to say, on the 14th December, 1898—the Yellow Jacket had once more been taken from Li Hung Chang; and that the dominant and extraordinary talents of the man, Yen How, had triumphed over all obstacles, and raised him to the very head of affairs at the Court of Peking. He had held the golden dish in a long interview before the Brother of the Sun and Moon; he was also the confidant of the Empress.

And the next day a telegram from Sir C. M. Macdonald, the

members to interested individuals among the crowd, which surrounded the House from Westminster Bridge round to the Aquarium. London went to sleep with some small degree of quietude that night, Mr. Carzon's reply having been published in an eagerly bought-up 10 o'clock edition.

But the next morning, Mr. Goschen being abroad at an early hour, it was suddenly discovered that, by some extraordinary means, Malta was telegraphically isolated from England, and a hurried telegram was at once despatched from the Admiralty to Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, the Flag-Officer in Commission at Portsmouth.



From the poop of the French vessel
rose a wide column of smoke.

British Minister in China, reached the Foreign Office. This was at once made public.

It stated that China professed herself unable to meet the next accruing interest instalment on the sixteen millions loan, though the Minister had information from Sir Robert Hart, the Controller of the Imperial Maritime Customs, which led him to doubt the avowal of inability.

Whatever else this might mean, it certainly seemed to mean war. The security for China's default, real or pretended, which was due to England, had already been placed under the control of Russia.

In the House of Commons the Under-Secretary stated that there was still a hope of peace—a hope that "the great Empire of Russia would act with that spirit of fairness and magnanimity in this appalling crisis which alone could prove her worthy of her august traditions." These words were borne at a run by dozens of excited

CHAPTER IV. FIRST BLOOD.

BEFORE eleven o'clock the *Majestic*, the flag-ship of the Channel Squadron, was leaving Portsmouth harbour behind her at the rate of eleven knots an hour. She was under the command of the Senior Officer in Command of the squadron, Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Stephenson; and with her went the little gunboat *Halcyon*.

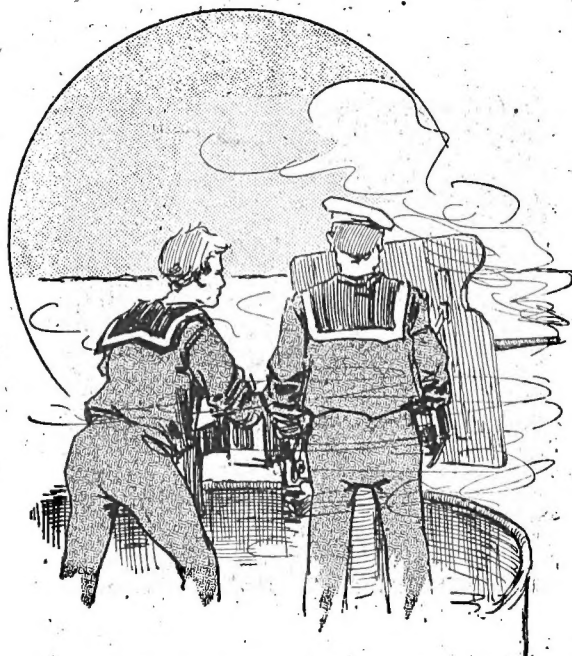
The mystery underlying the sudden journey of this strange couple was not very difficult to be unravelled. The truth was, the Government was greatly startled by the event of the morning. The *Majestic* was, in reality, a convoy to the *Halcyon*; the smaller vessel was acting as a dispatch-boat to Malta; and the battleship was seeing her on her journey till she was deemed to be out of danger molestation.

It had come to that already.

At the Government offices the words "treachery" and "war" had risen to more than one agitated lip. Europe, it was felt, was drifting, drifting—whither?

The task of the *Halcyon* was to warn the Governor of Malta, and to order the mobilisation of the Mediterranean Fleet near the Straits of Gibraltar. It might be necessary at a few hours' notice to block the entrance of the Mediterranean; it might even be necessary to hurl back a foreign invader from the shores of Britain; and the Channel Squadron was woefully limited in weight of metal.

During the day business in London came practically to a standstill. Wholesale withdrawals of foreign securities were reported from the City. By 3 p.m. it was generally known that a junior military attaché to the Embassy at Paris had arrived by private yacht with a sealed despatch from Sir E. J. Monson, and had hurried to the Foreign Office.



- The leonine growl of the Gardners.

A day of almost breathless tension reached its climax when, at 9 p.m., Mr. Curzon made the announcement to a full House that peaceful negotiations were still in progress with Russia, but that, late in the afternoon, Germany had made demands of Britain and China with respect to the recently-ceded territories, with which England, as he might say at once, would certainly be unable to comply.

The next morning, before break of day, England found herself telegraphically disconnected with the Continent.

About this precise hour the *Majestic*, having her small companion some half a mile or more away on her starboard quarter, was butting her way, about S.W. by S., through a rough Biscay sea. It was a cold and squally morning, still dark, though a chill hint of day now mingled bleakly with the East. The sea was handling both ships rudely, and the *Majestic's* ponderous lurching through some six or seven degrees brought the heaving green sea washing about the base of her forward barrette, while from the bows of the *Halcyon* it went hissing aft in a continuous cataract of spray.

It was just after five bells in the morning watch, at an hour when the gloomy grey of the morning had lightened a little, that the lookout man on board the *Majestic* reported

a big ship steaming leisurely south right upon them about six miles astern. The rate of the *Majestic* was 'about ten knots, that of the stranger about six; but immediately after coming into sight, a black cloud of redundant smoke pouring from her funnels at once revealed the stranger's intention to improve her pace.

That she had been lurking about with some object of search was clear. That she was now getting up steam seemed to indicate, if anything, that she had found what she was looking for.

In two minutes it was made out that she was *La Gloire*, a French battleship of about the weight and armature of the *Majestic*.

La Gloire's cloud of smoke was premature—it occasioned a suspicion of her motives. The first thing which Sir Henry Stephenson did was to order the *Halcyon* by trumpet-call to steam at full speed S.W. a distance of five miles. The *Halcyon*, at all events, had to be kept out of danger.

Yet he could hardly have expressed his reason for giving this order. Was anyone at war with anyone else? He was ignorant of the fact, if so.

He was not long in doubt. *La Gloire*, even while getting up steam, had pricked off her course four points to starboard. It seemed as if she was about to give chase to the *Halcyon*.

"What! Are we in for a fight then, Captain?" said the Vice-Admiral with a slight smile of surprise, and a puckered brow.

"It almost looks like it, certainly," replied Fleet-Captain Hardy.

"Well, come now, we shall see," said the Vice-Admiral.

By this time *La Gloire* had not only hoisted her colours, but had extra colours on the masts and stays. The *Majestic* wore the ordinary single ensign.

Captain Hardy had ordered steam for full speed. The next moment the *Majestic* swung round to starboard about four points. She was still ahead of *La Gloire*. At her present course and speed she would interpose between the English gunboat and the French ship.

For quite half-an-hour the two ships continued to approach each other slowly and obliquely, having started from a separating interval of about five miles. On this course the sea was more aft, and the rolling and sullen plunging of the ships was less marked.

On board the *Majestic* meanwhile all was bustling action. Decks were cleared, magazines were opened, and ammunition and projectiles got out; water-tight doors were closed. The dawn lightened to a chill and drear twilight.

The real object of *La Gloire* was to intercept and capture any dispatch-boat from the Channel, which might attempt to take intelligence through the Straits, for it had been anticipated that such an attempt would be made. The sending out of the battleship with such an object was, however, a breach of international law and a base stroke of treachery, for no one had declared war with England, though signed declarations of hostilities were already in the *bureaux* of more than one of the ambassadors at London.

That the dispatch-boat should be convoyed, and by a first-class battle-ship like the *Majestic*, was unexpected. *La Gloire* found herself checkmated. There was her prize before her, but between her and it was the thunder and lightning of England.

But though checkmated, she showed no intention of being checked. She kept on her way with rising speed. The two ships, in malign silence, like two red planets rushing to jarring combat, drew nearer. When their speed had increased to thirteen knots, they were about a mile apart. Decks on both were cleared, collision-mats were ready, preparations were made for rigging torpedoes in an emergency. Nearer, in awful silence, they drew, two giants with limbs oiled for battle; and the bleak and raw sea-wind of the dawning made hoarse sounds above their funnels.

But one of the ships was still in doubt whether there was

to be fighting, and, if so, why. There was a brief consultation on board the *Majestic*, and then she signalled:

"Are we combatants?"

There was no reply.

To this silence the *Majestic* sent aloft the answer:

"Trafalgar."

And now the taleful silence recommenced. Both commanders had stationed themselves in their conning-towers.

altered her course by several points to the eastward, and impetuously bore down upon the *Majestic*.

"Well," said Sir Henry Stephenson to himself. "That is uncommonly like a declaration of war, if anything can be. Well, then, Mr. Frenchman——"

Immediately the *Majestic*, too, pricked off eastward, her after pair of 67-ton guns being kept trained on the enemy as she manœuvred. The ships were now so well

within effective range that the *Majestic's* thin smoke, blown into a wide hovering fog by the east wind, half concealed her movements from *La Gloire*.

For a time it seemed as if the British ship were in retreat and the French giving chase; then suddenly both ships were hidden from each other's sight. Sir Henry, taking advantage of his windward position, had thrown



A furious bombardment of quick-firing guns was opened.

On either ship not a soul was to be made out by the glasses save the crews of the quick-firing guns on the hurricane decks, and of the machine-guns in the tops. By five minutes past seven the fleet-engineer of the *Majestic* announced that he had steam enough to drive the vessel at her utmost trial speed.

The strategy of the French commander in not answering the *Majestic's* question was soon apparent, for Sir Henry Stephenson felt himself bound to wait for the first shot, being uncertain how matters stood on shore. And the first shot in modern naval warfare must often mean victory.

The two vessels slowly converged, *La Gloire* on the other's starboard side, steering S.W.; the *Majestic* on the other's port bow heading S.W. by W. Suddenly *La Gloire* sharply

overboard some twenty casks of smoke-producing tow and naptha and tar, which at once separated the two ships with a blackness of thick red-brown reek, mingled near the water with bickering tongues of flame. The commander of *La Gloire*, fearing that in this fog of fume the *Majestic* might suddenly turn about and ram him, at once changed his course south-west, and was now the retreating ship. But the English admiral had guessed his thought, and when the region of the smoke-making composition was passed, the beam of the *Majestic* was abreast of *La Gloire's* poop.

It was the lieutenant in charge of the fore-barbette of the *Majestic* who first woke the thunder of this winter morning fight.

Simultaneously, with one awful bang of wrath that shook

the *Majestic* herself from stem to stern, both the 67-tonners of this barbette went crashing into *La Gloire's* quarters.

At this moment the ships were not half a mile apart. When the smoke cleared it was at once seen that the whole stern armament of *La Gloire* was in ruins, her after-barbette shattered, and the two heavy guns unshipped. One of the shells had penetrated abaft her after-armoured tube and there burst, killing fifty men, and rending into a chaos of *débris* all it met. From the poop of the French ship rose a wide column of smoke. At the same time a furious bombardment of quick firing guns was opened from both vessels. In three minutes every unarmoured or unsheltered spot in each ship was cleared of every living thing. Twelve-pounders, six-pounders, three-pounders mingled in swift-cracking uproar, punctuated by the leonine growl of the Gardners, and the more deliberate detonation of the Nordenfeldts. All the air was war, and all the intervening sea a commotion of hissing foam.

But now the machine-guns in the tops were silent. Their protecting shields had been shot away, and their crews annihilated. One of *La Gloire's* funnels was gone, and the other pierced, while three projectiles from her had burst their way through shields of six-inch nickel steel, and put three of the *Majestic's* central battery guns out of action, striking them fairly on the chase. Within three minutes the two ships had belched forth a flaming hail of some twenty-two thousand rounds of shot, riddling all except the most heavily-armoured parts of each other, tearing to shreds all light gun-screens, and turning unarmoured ends and box-batteries into shambles.

Already it seemed improbable that either ship, unless the other were at once destroyed, could come out of this anarchy of thunder, and live.

The starboard side of the *Majestic* was still presented to the port of *La Gloire*; but *La Gloire's* speed had been greatly reduced, owing to injuries to her funnels, and the *Majestic* had forged forward abreast, then somewhat ahead, of the other.

Vice-Admiral Stephenson was every moment awaiting the second crash of his after-barbette into the French ship's beam, when *La Gloire's* two fore-barbette guns sent out their voices simultaneously.

One of the shots glanced against the centre armour-belt of the *Majestic* at the water-line, leapt, struck her fore-armoured tube, and went diving far forward into the sea, where it burst in a high water-lily of spouting foam.

The other wrought terrible havoc. It struck the *Majestic's* central battery at the height of the deck, burst inside, blew away the chief part of the hurricane deck, and turned all the guns in that battery into a mere *débris* of twisted and crumpled metal.

But as the British ship staggered and reeled at this blow, her bluejackets sent up a cheer: for the next instant the after-barbette in their own ship was talking, too; and a few seconds afterwards it was seen that *La Gloire's* fore-castle was on fire, that she had gone down by the bows, and that her screws, half out of the water, were furiously revolving in a broad mound of wheeling spume.

Was she sinking, then? The British Vice-Admiral half expected now to see her strike her flag. But even as he looked, he was undeceived.

Yonder, a hundred yards astern, somewhat to his port side, he saw a sight which might have made even the heart of a Nelson leap to his mouth. It was a small object, looking like a cubical box; and even as he glanced at it, it disappeared beneath the waves.

He knew this to be one of the ingenuities from the Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée. It was a submarine boat; and the object which he had seen for a moment was the top of her conning-tower as she rose for an observation of distances and directions.

The submarine boat had been secretly lowered into the water from *La Gloire's* starboard side. Her motor was electric, supplied from storage batteries, and her speed,

not at first considerable. Vice-Admiral Stephenson knew that her aim was to pass under his torpedo-nets, carrying an electrically-fired torpedo, to be attached to the bottom of his already half-ruined ship.

At once he went circling at full speed to starboard, crossing the bows of the now slowly-progressive *La Gloire*, one of whose fore-barbette guns was useless, and the other unready to fire.

At the same time he had rapidly lowered from his port side a second-class torpedo boat which he then carried on deck. By means of hot water from the *Majestic's* boilers she was already under steam, and with careful handling, in spite of the parent ship's now headlong wheeling flight, she touched the water in safety, and at once went fretting fussily through the billows, a mere cloud of hurrying spray, on her fateful way, at a speed of fourteen knots. Like some buzzing bee with deadly sting, she drove straight upon *La Gloire*.

The alarm on the French ship at this hastening ruin resembled panic. Disregarding the movements of the *Majestic*, her commander at once put his helm a-port, and turning upon his small foe the comparatively uninjured armament of his starboard side, poured forth, in one continuous roll of artillery, a bombardment of some twelve thousand pounds per minute. *La Gloire* was now, however, well in the trough of the sea, which flowed in bulky swells from east to west: the greater portion of her huge outburst of fire failed to take effect; and still the puffing thing came near and yet nearer, overwhelmed, but steadfast, drowned but headlong, tiny but terrible.

The climax of the fight was near. It had lasted but a few minutes: it had seemed like an eternity.

At about three hundred yards from *La Gloire* the little torpedo-boat launched a Whitehead.

As the oiled and gleaming needle of steel slid swiftly into the water, it passed straight through the body of a great buxom swell, and came instantly out on the other side, making directly for *La Gloire's* quarter; but before it could reach her, the ship manoeuvred slightly to starboard, and the projectile slipped hurriedly under her stern, and exploded harmlessly some distance away.

But even as it did so, another torpedo came shooting through the waves from the little boat.

At the same time the crew of the torpedo boat was seen to be wildly leaping at random over her sides into the waves. Seen—but dimly seen—for the whole craft from stern to stem, as well as all that region of the water into which she was now plunging on her last voyage, was enveloped in one hissing white cloud of stinging vapour. Two of her men instantly sank, scalded to death. A twelve-pounder, shot upwards, had burst into her boiler.

It had not come from *La Gloire*. It had come from the unseen thing which was cruising darkly beneath the sea in search of the *Majestic*.

Immediately the submarine boat rose again, and the man in the conning-tower, looking a moment abroad, saw the *Majestic*—or rather he saw a vast mass of smoke which utterly concealed the *Majestic* and the direction of her bow. All he could note was that the great ship was now fearfully and wonderfully near to *La Gloire*; that the huge pillar of cloud was approaching *La Gloire*—rapidly, rapidly—with horrid impetuosity.

He did not hesitate a moment, but, putting his fins into play, instantly sank, and made for a point at which he believed he would intercept the rushing ship.

The mass of smoke which he had seen round the *Majestic* had been intentionally caused by her Commander. The Vice-Admiral had ordered every gun which still worked to be discharged, whether they bore upon the French ship or not, and enveloped in the mantle of ascending reek which poured from the hot weapons, he put his helm hard down, suddenly left the evolutionary curve of sixteen points through which he had been circling, and drove straight upon *La Gloire*. He was going to ram.

At that awful moment expectation stood in horror. "Prepare to ram!" went forth the command from the conning-tower, and every man on the *Majestic* fell flat on his face, as though the trump of doom had sounded. And now, while the clock might tick, and tick again, the men on *La Gloire* became aware of what was coming. Up out of her envelope of vapour suddenly loomed the *Majestic* upon them, near and huge, like a monster rising from the deep. Just then the remaining fore-barbette gun of *La Gloire* was being discharged, and the ships being nearly bow to bow, the shell went forth with disastrous havoc, shattering the thickly armoured fore-barbette of the *Majestic*, battering the conning-tower, destroying the funnels, and shocking the Vice-Admiral, who was not directly hit, into a state of insensibility.

But even as it did so, the crash came. The ram of the *Majestic* touched *La Gloire* on her starboard bow, glanced a little, then with a horrid "z-z-zip-p," "z-z-zip-p," then with a bursting and rending uproar like the cracking asunder of an arsenal, went tearing and smashing a shapeless hole 20ft. in length along her beam. The sea poured into the doomed ship; and at once she lurched bow-ward to starboard.

But the ram of the *Majestic* was not yet clear of *La Gloire* when the most stupendous hubbub of the whole battle, drowning every other sound, rent the heavens. It was a double detonation, yet the two reports followed so closely one upon the other, that they seemed almost like one.

They were the sounds of two torpedoes.

The 28,000 tons of the two great ships half-leapt from the water, and jumped with a start apart, shivering to their keels; and two immense pillars of white cloud, which soon were one, rose high above them, shutting them from each other.

One of these two torpedoes had been affixed by the crew of the submarine boat beneath the bow of *La Gloire*, which they had mistaken for the *Majestic*; the other was the second of the two which had been despatched from the *Majestic's* torpedo boat before she had sunk. It had caught on to the keel of *La Gloire* sternwards, and its explosion had been delayed, perhaps half-a-minute, till now.

When the smoke cleared a little, the commander of *La*

Gloire was seen, with blood-soaked clothes, and haggard face, and eyes staring with horror, standing on the wreck of his after-barbette, and frantically hauling down his colours. He sent forth to the wreck which he had made of the *Majestic* this cry of terror—

"Au nom de Dieu!—we are sinking!—for God's sake. . . ."

The captain of the *Majestic* at once lowered the only boat on his deck which was at all capable of floating, though half of even her port-side, too, was smashed away. The whole crew of the British vessel had hurried to deck, ready, even as they cheered in victory, to aid in the work of rescue.

But as the boat pushed off, men were seen leaping hurriedly from *La Gloire*, in a vain attempt to escape her suction as she went down. She gave them little time. The bursting of the two torpedoes fore and aft had simply turned her into a mass of disconnected *débris*. She lurched a little aft—up went her bows like two hands laid together in prayer—then her whole length settled evenly lower; she lurched aft again, obliquely, clumsily; then, as if with sudden resolve, she skipped forward, dived her nose briskly into the sea, and disappeared.

Three of her crew of six hundred were saved.

Meantime, the captain of the *Majestic* was signalling to the *Halcyon*, waiting, eager for fight, five miles away:

"We are sinking—make haste."

The great ship was settling slowly down by the bows; for the torpedo which had burst beneath the bows of *La Gloire* had wrought great havoc upon the other's forward bottom also; nor could the pumps produce much impression upon the rushing waters.

The *Halcyon* succeeded in taking off the hundred and fifty-two that were left of the brave crew, taking also on board the crew of the French submarine boat, who had escaped injury. They hardly stopped to watch the *Majestic* settle slowly down before the gunboat's bows were once more turned, to bear her momentous message, toward the Straits.

But if Dr. Yen How had been there to see that battle of the giants, and its result, the corners of his eyes would have wrinkled up into a very web of tickled merriment

(To be continued.)



DO THE DEAD COME BACK?

MANY times during the last few months I have taken up my pen to give to the world the story of Geza Domenico, but always, after having written several pages entirely satisfactory to myself, I have felt the restraining touch of an invisible hand upon my own, and have laid my work aside.

But now that I know he is dead, the impulse to write has come strongly upon me, and I feel that it can be written.

The family of Domenico is one of the oldest and most aristocratic in Italy. It has been for generations one of the greatest refinement, has never been connected with scandals at court, and has always lent the influence of its wealth and great name to the music and art and literature of the time.

Geza first saw the light of day in Florence,
Where the quiet Arno flows;

and up to his twelfth year breathed in the atmosphere of his romantic surroundings, the poetry and dreamy romances of that most beautiful of all Italian cities. Then through some fancied intrigue of his father, the elder Domenico was banished from Italy. Crossing with his family into Austria-Hungary, he located after several years in Buda-Pesth, that centre whence so many musical geniuses flash upon the world, weaving into their Hungarian melodies all the wild dreamings of love and battle and death, which we find threading so much of the Hungarian composition.

Here Geza, with every opportunity wealth could afford, perfected himself in his studies on the violin, and in his twenty-first year produced his opera, *The King and the Subject*, scoring an instantaneous success. The score was of the highest order, and produced a profound sensation in the Hungarian capital. Not so, however, the libretto, which I had the misfortune to write. Innocent enough in itself, in its allusion to the rulers of the country, the artists reading more deeply between the lines than even I had dreamt, and adding to the sentiment the buffoonery of the stage, the libretto, when it reached the court, was as unpopular as the music was acceptable.

The mandate issued from Vienna, and Geza was compelled to quit the country. I, being an Englishman, was treated less cavalierly; but in various ways, which one even less observant than myself could not fail to note, I was led to believe my continued residence in Buda-Pesth, or indeed in any part of Austria-Hungary, would be greatly detrimental to my health.

Geza realised enough from the sale of his score to organise an orchestra, which he took across the Atlantic for an American tour.

Either because New York had been favoured that season with several imported orchestras or because of incompetent management, Geza's venture proved a dismal failure. It certainly was not because of any lack of artistic ability.

Too proud to write home for assistance, crowded to the wall by local musicians who were jealous of his superior ability, unable to speak fluently the language of the country, Domenico, in a moment of folly and

desperation, enlisted in Uncle Sam's army and was sent to join a regiment stationed at Fort McKenny, in Wyoming, in the heart of the Wolf Tongue Range of the Big Horn Mountains.

Several years afterwards chance sent me to Wyoming, and at McKinney we renewed our friendship of former years. Here, at least, where Geza was as much out of place as an arpeggio in a dirge, there was no danger of punishment for any shortcomings in the wording of librettos, or the manner in which they are produced.

Every evening after mounting guard I used to sit in Domenico's room in the musician's barracks, and listen to his music by the hour. Often he improvised, but more frequently he played with his score before him, and forgot his surroundings until weariness would recall him to himself.

To me, with only a rudimentary knowledge of written music, his books were only a hieroglyphic maze of bars and dashes, but to Geza they were the Open Sesame which threw wide the gates of Paradise.

Many months passed with these evenings of delight, and I grew to love the man as I loved his music. Later I began to notice that he absented himself more and more in trips to the little town of Buffalo, some four miles from the post, at that time, like the majority of frontier towns, peopled with a rough but generous class.

Of the women who had drifted into the locality little need be said. Among them, however, was one more attractive than the rest, musical, and an appreciative listener. Geza, not understanding the degradation of the life into which choice or circumstance had led her, lost his heart to her.

Not until it was too late did the terrible and shameful truth flash upon him. When he came home that night I knew. He picked up the violin and listlessly drew the bow across the strings, then laid it aside wearily; but he told me nothing.

I left him alone with his grief, waiting till he should come for me. Several days later he was reported missing from the post. He was not in the town, and after forty-eight hours I started out alone to seek some trace of him.

Clear Creek Canyon is one of the most beautiful in all Wyoming. The creek lashes itself to foam over its rocky bed; on either side the tree-clad mountains rise to a great height, and in the far background the snow-clad peaks lift themselves into the impenetrable deep of the sky. To the mere plodder a mountain torrent is a thing of danger, venting its anger in incessant roaring; but to the artist, the musician, and the poet, it is at once a delight and an inspiration.

The artist, in the mad swirl of the waters, sees such graceful curvings in infinite variety as he can find nowhere else; the musician finds there the orchestra of Nature forever voicing its "To Salutiamo" to the infinite; for the poet it is the siren wooing him with the seductive sweetness of her voice, pitched at times to some ruder note, as though she sought jealously to drown the whisperings of the leaves. Knowing

Domenico as I did, I felt certain that somewhere here I should find trace of him, and I was not far wrong.

After riding nearly the entire day along the winding and sometimes dangerous trail, at last I reached a comparatively level spot where the waters flowed quietly for a space.

My horse, affrighted at something I could not see, snorted suddenly, reared, turned, and started to run down the cañon.

No amount of coaxing, nor even a vigorous application of the spurs could induce him to return. Slipping the reins over his head so that he might graze along the trail, I shouldered my rifle and proceeded on foot.

Tremulously, as the faint stirring of the leaves when the day begins to make itself felt, there came floating to me the tones of Geza's violin. Strange that I should have happened upon him at such a moment. I recognised the piece that he was about to play; it was the prelude of the second act of his opera, and entitled the "Awakening of Love." One who has witnessed a dawn in the tropics, when a thousand songsters were piping their matin lays, might form a fair conception of the riotous irresponsibility and joyousness of the music that came drifting towards me across the open. At Budapest, on the occasion of its initial production, the audience rose *en masse* and called for the composer. Again and again was Geza compelled to bow his acknowledgements, and finally, leaving the orchestra, he rendered the obbligato from the stage.

A peculiar feature of the composition was the impression it conveyed of absolute purity. Resting under its spell, the mind became calm and serene and clear as the depths of a mountain spring.

A short distance up the cañon I saw Geza standing by a large boulder, and near him, to my amazement and horror, a huge mountain lion was dancing and playing with all the abandon and agility of a kitten.

Thrilled as I was by the music, I realised his dangerous position. Following the overture, he played the part which formed the climax of the second act, "Amor Trionfale." It rang forth with all the strength and vigour of the "Hallelujah" chorus. Then it seemed that a miracle was being worked. A black cloud fell across the sun and the cañon was in heavy shadow. A feeling of intense dread crept over me; the lion, whining, thrust his head between his fore paws and lay there quivering. Through the quiet of the cañon stole the measure of a "Miserere," the equal of which has never been produced. Low over his violin Geza was bending, throwing all the sadness of his soul into those quivering chords, while unconsciously my lips framed the words:

In death's dark hour remain thou near.

Again the theme failed, and I felt it was the denunciation.

I could hear him cursing fate or what you will with all the depths of his nature. The setting sun had slipped round until it shone squarely into the cañon, purpling the leaves of the trees and the grasses, while against the Eastern sky the snow mountains rose like pillars of fire.

I felt the mad blood rushing to my head, and through me crept the desire for retaliation on an untoward fate, which must have animated Geza as he played. Then suddenly the lion broke the spell.

Loud and terrifying, but resonant as a huge bass viol, the roar of the brute woke the echoes of the forest, and sounded in perfect unison with the shriller fury of the violin. The lion's jaws were open, his tail was lashing

furiously from side to side, and he began crouching ready for a spring. Then I raised my rifle and sent a bullet through his heart. He was in the air when the bullet struck him.

His huge jaws knocked the violin from Geza's grasp, and the dead body falling upon it crushed it completely. Then I approached Geza, and he started at the sight of me. He did not realise the danger he had escaped. The loss of the violin was a great grief to him.

It was a valued Guarnerius, which had been in his family for generations, and had been his constant companion since childhood.

He picked up the scattered fragments and wrapped them up tenderly. I secured the skin of the lion, and finding my horse, Geza mounted him, and together we returned to the post. Geza lay in the hospital with a fever for several weeks, and shortly after his recovery his troop was ordered to another post, and except in memory he passed completely out of my life. A soldier taxidermist prepared the skin for me and applied a preservative to the head by which it retained its natural appearance.

This was fifteen years ago.

* * * * *

Last evening at home I answered a ring at the door. A figure dressed in black, and but dimly discernible in the gloom outside, handed me a roll of paper tied with a black ribbon, and ere I could ask any question disappeared into the night.

I returned to the drawing-room where my wife was sitting at the piano, and opened the roll curiously. It was an arrangement for the piano, dedicated to me and composed by Geza Domenico.

My wife looked it over for a few minutes and then began playing, slowly at first, and then more and more interestedly. It was the music of Clear Creek Cañon, softened and subdued.

Gradually, as it developed, however, I felt the old sensations creeping over me, and then beautifully sweet and clear rose the notes of the violin blending with the piano in a composition of exquisite harmony. How can I adequately describe the return of the old emotions as the piece progressed? The hot blood surged to my temples as before, and then to my utter horror the lion skin on the hearth gradually assumed the shape it held in life, the tail lashed madly from side to side, and the jaws were red with blood. Then there was a blood-curdling growl, a crash of broken strings, and all was silence.

After a time, which seemed very long to me, I bent to touch the lion skin, and it fell to pieces in my grasp, and as I lifted the head, which had fallen entirely flat, there was underneath it only a handful of ashes on the hearth.

You, who never rested under the spell of Domenico's music, may say that I was imaginative, or under the influence of a self-induced hypnotic condition; but I, I know that Geza Domenico, intangible and invisible, stood in the room last night, compelling through the perfection of his art, a perfect interpretation of the score and joinings with his violin in a production of incomparable beauty.

And through my life long I shall carry the conviction that with the brute creation there is a to-morrow of death, and that an all-wise and beneficent God doth in his own good time guide even these

By ways we cannot comprehend
To some unguessed, benignant end.

HOWARD HURLBUTT.



A Bunch of Violets.



THERE was tender allurements in the soft spring air, as if nature were capriciously avoiding a definite understanding with the conquered, retreating winter. In the park the tops of the trees showed delicately green, the young foliage sending its subtle, pervasive fragrance over the neighbouring streets. The gardeners had long since begun to set out the primly marked beds of scarlet geraniums and shrubs, and the rich soil, harrowed up in readiness in dark discolours over the lawn, emitted a pungent, pleasant odour. It was one of those days which depressed one within doors. Escherling had been confined to his office since morning, and his ears throbbed with the din of the noises of the city and the cries of the newsboys. He left the building somewhat uncertain as to his destination, but he finally decided to go to the park.

On his way down to the corner, he passed his old florist's shop, the windows a glorious mass of red roses and early Parma violets. It seemed natural to Escherling to-day to enter, as he had not done for nearly a year, and order the inevitable violets, having but one desire to possess them. He could promptly have furnished a certain address for them to be sent, as he had done the last time that he had been here, but as the clerk paused expectantly with pencil in hand for his orders there rushed bitterly over him the depth of the wide abyss between him and the one who unconsciously filled his very thoughts. A sudden decision struck him—since Elenore Moyne was yet out of town, what prevented him from sending them to her, just as he used to do? She would never be the wiser as to the donor, and to him there seemed an indefinable tender bond between them by these flowers. He gave the number with a voice which faltered, and detaching a few for his coat, hastily left the shop with a boyish feeling of elation he could not yet define.

As he aimlessly made his way across the park, his feet sank deep into the young velvet grass. The violet sellers were crying shrilly their wares everywhere. The air was loud with the birds' vespers and twitterings. Great golden flies glittered in the white sunlight, and two crimson ladybirds coolly paraded his arm.

To his left some children were trying to fly a kite, the white capped nurse looking on with approval. Life had aroused itself. Escherling felt it coursing rapidly through his veins, and he began to take a dignified interest in the success of the childish amusement.

The light folds of a woman's gown arrested his attention under some trees, and he was absently thinking what a pretty spring picture she made, and tried to recall some appropriate lines of Swinburne's to that effect. She suddenly turned her head as if at his mental

inquiry, and he forgot about the quotation as he walked to her.

"Fortune favours me to-day." He held out his hand to her as he spoke. "I have met you, and a spider crawled all over my face. Is it an omen of the summer time?" She had flushed a tender pink at his approach, but he had not noticed it.

"I do not know," she said in a pretty voice of soft intonations. "Elenore Moyne is at home again."

Escherling felt the colour recede swiftly from his face. He dropped her hand with a gesture of annoyance. Besides, there were those flowers, the former favourite of both. He had too much pride to force any attempt at reconciliation on her, especially since she had taken the initiative in coldly sundering all between them. And he had never known why, for he could not beg for an explanation from her.

"Surely I may plead other interests than engrossment in Miss Moyne's actions?" he replied with vexation, joining step with her towards the pond. Escherling failed to see the shy, sweet glance the girl at his side gave him. He was endeavouring to meet her light talk and conversational tittle-tattle half way, but his levity sat heavily on him. His entire being surged recklessly with the old feelings which Elenore's very name summoned to life. The birds seemed to chirp it from the boughs above, and it seemed to be murmured in the ripple of the water. A covey of white swans sailed gracefully along by their side, and they paused to watch the gyrations of an ugly duckling deserted and avoided by his more favoured companions. In sudden pity Escherling singled it out for his favour and fed it somewhat extravagantly on divers unhealthful but eagerly devoured foods.

There sounded the staccato beat of horses' hoofs on the hard road near them, and he turned indifferently at their approach. He had only a dim recollection afterwards of a girl's pale, aristocratic face, two cold, scornful eyes on him, and not the slightest recognition from her as he fastened his burning gaze on her, and the Moyne carriage had whirled by. He felt strangely sick at heart and depressed, and tried to believe that she had not really seen him. Perhaps she did not know that he had returned from his trip abroad during her absence, but common-sense dissipated all such idle thoughts, and he was forced by his own conclusion to acknowledge that his hopes were not realisable.

A certain fatigue had asserted itself, and with his companion he reached the chairs and abstractedly seated himself. One thought permeated his being, and he despised himself that he could still think of one who so evidently manifested her aversion to him. At that

moment a young fellow passed them whistling "Love's Dream After the Ball," and Escherling told the girl at his side that there were too many hallucinations in regard to the ancient emotion.

"Love is one of the illusions of life," he went on, with a hard little laugh, "for, after all, it is only a sort of apotheosis, endowing some particular one with virtues compatible with her appearance. It is our fault, of course, if we were deceived, and I suppose we should not censure the innocent offender for the deception, but that is not human nature."

She paled a trifle as he spoke, but he did not see it.

"You—you have never loved if you can speak like that," she said tremulously.

Escherling turned hotly towards her, but she went on rapidly before he could speak: "Love is God's blessing on man. It purifies our hearts and minds, and without it we would be as shipwrecked beings fighting for safety. It is ennobling, lifting our meaner nature above until we could give in voluntary renunciation our best beloved—even to another."

"I should like to see the man you would love, Esther," Escherling said, abruptly as she finished. She looked away, with a little catch in her breath, to where the pale green foliage fringed the confines of the park. "But I cannot agree with you—in one thing," he continued, his eyes intent on a familiar vehicle which had stopped to allow two ladies to alight.

His heart beat irregularly as the younger of the two seated herself at a short distance from him, where he could catch occasional ravishing glimpses of her proud profile and the glint of her brown, satiny long hair. He dared not look at it long for he was not sure of his control. It seemed to him that she must hear the restless clamour of his heart and leave, knowing that he was near. His voice trembled in spite of himself when he spoke again.

"Love is selfish," He watched Elenore Moyne as he talked. She had given a start of surprise at the sound of his voice and it did not escape him.

"I know that I could not give up—any one I loved to another," he stopped. "That would not be love, in my opinion, for the feeling is purely selfish, as all happiness is. Let me tell you the mistake a friend of mine made. There is no need to begin a monotonous cant about his personal appearance, his position and such nonsense. He was the average young fellow, of good impulse and heart, and he fell in love. Being of an intense nature, it was a whole-souled affair with him, and I suppose from his own overwhelming passion he doubtless attributed more charms to his beloved than she may have possessed, for he thought that she loved him even as he did her, and that was the illusion. There were certain things involving the honour of some one very dear to him—and, well, nearer to her.

"Some distributing element of humanity went to her with malicious tales about this, telling things really as they did exist, but compromising the innocent one—this—this friend of mine. If he cleared himself, he would inculpate the other participant in the affair, and that would hurt this girl he loved more—so he thought—than to let her believe him guilty, for the other was very near to her, while he was only dear—this was his conceit again. So he refused to explain, and she sent him from her, scorned and dishonoured by her. If she had loved him, she would have had faith in him and accepted his version of the circumstances. It was not her fault, of course, that he was deceived in

her. That is where the apotheosis comes in. She never had cared for him, but he made himself believe that she had."

"She did not love him," the girl at his side said decisively. "I do not wish to sit in judgment on another's actions, but to me no affection existed, or she would have believed in him, especially at that time when he needed her faith, and—" she ended abruptly. Escherling was watching Elenore Moyne with a white face, as she agitatedly arose and was urging her companion to depart.

Up through the avenue the carriage was coming towards them, the handsome horses impatiently pawing the earth.

"Violets! Violets!" the flower girls were calling. Then there was a sudden silence, and in that stillness it seemed to Escherling that a silent panorama of the barren years before him stalked noiselessly. There was the anguish of the past twelvemonth to verify it. He would humble his pride and take the one chance for happiness, and if he lost he could not be more desolate to-morrow than yesterday.

"Elenore!"

All of the pent-up anguish of his soul rang out as he gently called her name. She paused irresolutely, her head turned away from him. A blur of Parma violets showed on her bosom, and he felt a dull enjoyment, half malicious, that they were his and she did not know it.

"Elenore!"

He advanced half way to her. The girl with whom he had been talking looked after him with a dumb sorrow in her plaintive eyes. Elenore Moyne turned and met him squarely. Her face was whiter than ever, but a certain hard light had settled over it.

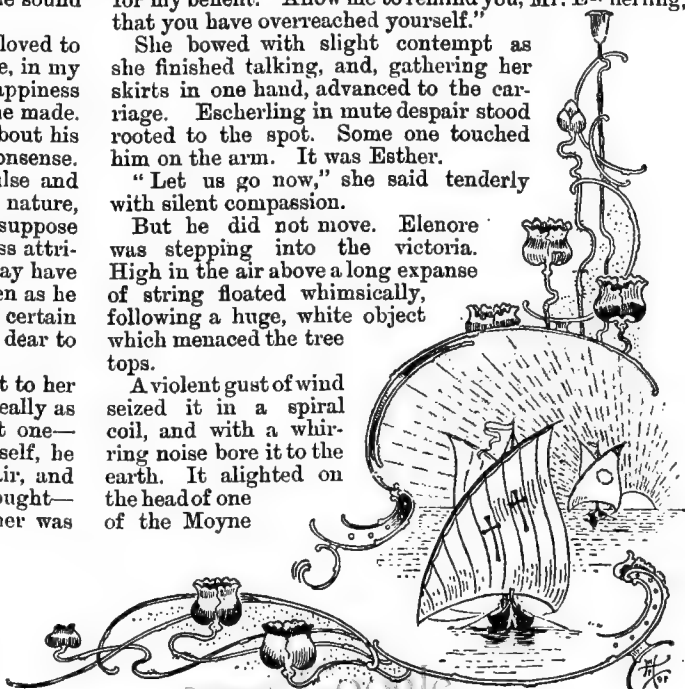
"You failed to tell me what those certain things involving your friend's honour were," she said cuttingly. "I infer that, too, was intentional, as was also this pretty little rustic idyll—a sort of 'As You Like It' for my benefit. Allow me to remind you, Mr. Escherling, that you have overreached yourself."

She bowed with slight contempt as she finished talking, and, gathering her skirts in one hand, advanced to the carriage. Escherling in mute despair stood rooted to the spot. Some one touched him on the arm. It was Esther.

"Let us go now," she said tenderly with silent compassion.

But he did not move. Elenore was stepping into the victoria. High in the air above a long expanse of string floated whimsically, following a huge, white object which menaced the tree tops.

A violent gust of wind seized it in a spiral coil, and with a whirling noise bore it to the earth. It alighted on the head of one of the Moyne





horses, and at the blow the leader gave one plunge and dragged the other in its frenzy down the drive.

Escherling was aghast at the suddenness of it all, as were the other bystanders. Only Elenore was in the vehicle, her face bloodless and distorted with fear. There was the swan-pond directly before them. She cast one agonised glance over the crowd of faces. A hasty bump against a tree threw off the coachman and left the reins dangling on the ground.

Escherling was telling himself that he had nothing to lose now, but he was wondering if she would think of him. Then he realised that another moment might mean death to her, and he bolted pell-mell through the group in hot pursuit to head them off. A woman ran rapidly after him and held him by the arm, but he shook her off madly. He saw the girl on the cushions turn all at once to him. In that brief space her eyes met his, repentant and tearful.

"Guy! Guy!" she screamed. "Save me!"

She had thought of him after all! With one bound he cleared the intervening space; caught at the bridle and pulled the frightened animals towards the earth, checking their progress so violently that the carriage shook. The horses, taken by surprise, stopped, trembling all over.

She was safe. Thank God for that! Beyond a few scratches the carriage was uninjured, and some distance back kindly hands had attended to the coachman. It was all over now. Escherling restored the reins to the driver's hands and turned to go. He would have risked his life again for another tearful glance from her eyes. But instead, feeling suddenly proud as she uttered no thanks to him, he sought out Esther, who, breathless and despairing, had watched the entire occurrence.

"Mr. Escherling!" he heard his name called in the cold voice again. He did not turn round. The veriest beggar, he told himself, would have thanked him warmly. The rustle of a woman's skirts as she alighted from a carriage, and her light swift tread over the sward behind him caught his ear. But still he paid no heed.

He turned half-way towards her; she was biting her lips to keep the tears back. He looked carelessly at her.

"I—I—want to thank—you," she cried brokenly. "I—I—"

"I do not wish for your thanks," he said cruelly; "I would have done the same for any one else."

"But—you—risked—your life to save mine—my very worthless one," she said hurriedly, nerving herself to be calm, "and—and—I would rather die—than—have you—die," she ended inarticulately, with a little sob. He faced her, almost afraid to trust himself.

"And those—other things which involved my friend's honour?" he asked, sparing her nothing.

"I—I do not care," she sobbed. "He could do nothing dishonourable and wrong. He—he—you—will—drive home with me?"

"If you will let him explain that affair relating to his honour"—Escherling's heart was beating so that it was with difficulty that he spoke. "He—he will not go back unless you will trust him and believe him! Will you, Elenore?"

She bowed her head slowly. She could not speak. Regardless of the curious eyes watching them, Escherling stepped to her and touched the violets at her throat.

"There is one more deception," he said, his hand trembling, her face was so near that he had to look away with resolution.

"I—I—know it," she said uncertainly. "I recognised them," and she led him across the soft grass to where the carriage stood, and as they drove off, living only in each other's presence, a woman's figure walked, as if fatigued, over to the entrance, her face drawn and pale, but in her eyes the light of a great, unselfish joy. It was Esther.

GREQUE.

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Here is a rough sketch of him, which, I am afraid, does not do complete justice to his remarkable personality.

Captain Kettle's Adventures, as told in *Pearson's Magazine*, are illustrated by MR. STANLEY L. WOOD, one of the finest black and white artists of the day.





The Mystery of One Palm Spring.

A GLIMMERING breadth of sand burning hot, a pitiless hot sun that made the back tingle; far away a desolate range of hills, still farther away the limit where sight ceased and sand and sky met. Cool, sweet water oozed up from a spring and noiselessly meandered out and spread around and lost itself again in the sand. There were a few bunches of green grass at the edge of the well, and some yerba mansa, with its rank smelling white and gold blossoms, grew in the sand where the water spread out. A solitary palm tree stood there, too; the mystery of the desert rustled in the broad fan leaves which it drooped over the water.

A hut built of mesquit poles, gunny sacks and mud—mostly mud, scooped from where the yerba mansa grew—was near the spring, the back of it against the hill of sand which was higher than the hut, and on the top of which grew a tall, ragged bunch of gallette.

The piece of canvas that hung for a door was pulled back and a woman stepped out. She was young and tall and gracious and queenly of presence; her eyes and hair were the soft darkness of a desert summer night.

A man, tall and dark also, but of a forbidding darkness that seemed rather of soul than of complexion, sat lazily against the palm and blew whiffs of pale smoke up among the cool-looking but hot leaves.

The woman paused with the canvas door in her hand; he indolently turned his head and looked a slow, searching gaze into her face, and watching her thus, he slowly quoted:

"A face—a face that launched a thousand battle-ships, and fired the cloud-topped towers of Ilium."

A flash of displeasure swept red across her face.

She turned away from him and called in a soft voice that had in it a tone of tenderness:

"Children!"

Two fairy-like children, a boy and a girl, slid down from the tall bunch of gallette and trotted round the hut. Their yellow hair glistened like sunlight caught in a spider web, and so exactly alike were they that, but for the clothes they wore, their own mother could not have told them apart.

"What did you want, mamma?" said the girl.

"What did you want, mamma?" echoed the boy.

"I wanted you, my darlings—I always want you." She hugged them to her breast and kissed them again and again.

"How you do dote on those children," said the man still blowing the pale smoke up among the leaves. "I never could understand how a full grown, sensible person could lavish so much affection on a child; it's a sinful waste of material. Nobody with a love nature so abnormally developed as yours ever amounted to anything in the world—ever did anything for humanity, ever made any great discovery in science, or thought out an invention, or found a new planet; they can do nothing but love, love, love!"

"You never loved anybody, did you?"

"Never; I once made a foolish woman believe that I did."

A reminiscent smile lingered in the cruelly curved corner of his mouth.

The woman shrugged her shoulders contemptuously!

"Poor fool! She did not believe it long!"

"Not long—oh, no; not long. Besides," continued he between the whiffs of smoke, "your kind of love-nature is small—very small; it winds itself round its own and shuts the world of humanity out. It would make any sacrifice, even of life itself, for the thing it loved, but would not sacrifice the thing it loves for all humanity. Now, I suppose you would not be willing to give up those youngsters—although they'd make such beautiful angels—if it would stop the plague or save a million lives?"

She clasped the children closer to her breast.

"You have no heart," she said.

"Heart is not what a civilised world needs; it needs intellect and philosophy and reason. Heart is simply instinct; it is what the wild animal has that stands at bay with her young ones behind her and lets the dogs tear her to pieces."

"Mamma, did the dogs tear the little young animals up?" said the girl.

"Mamma, did the dogs tear the little young animals all up?" echoed the boy.

"No, darlings."

They cuddled nearer to her, and patted her face in trustful lovingness.

The man knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put it into his shirt pocket; he laughed an amused chuckle.

"Nature was prodigal of beauty to this family, but was very niggard of brains." He smiled at his own witicism.

The children lay down in the shade of the hut and slept; the woman sat by and fanned them with a leaf of

the palm. When the sun had nearly set and the oven-like heat of the desert began to cool, then the man went out to where his horses were staked on the scattering bunches of gallette, and led one of them to the hut and turned the other loose. He saddled as leisurely as though all the time in the world were his, and then called to the children.

"Come, children, and take your ride."

They came trotting to him, but when he stooped to lift them, the girl darted away.

"I forgot to kiss mamma," she said.

"I forgot to kiss mamma," cried the boy, darting after her.

He waited patiently; when they came back he set the girl before him and the boy behind the saddle.

"Why do you always put him behind—because he is a boy?"

"No; because he is an echo; why, he hasn't enough individuality to be hypnotised, except through her."

The dark eyes of the woman contracted with displeasure.

"I wish you would not keep the children out so late as you did last night," then wistfully, "please."

"Why?" he asked unconcernedly.

"I was frightened," she said simply; "it was quite dark when you came back."

"Why should you be frightened? This is the safest place in the world for you, and what could happen to the little ones—haven't I had them out riding every evening for a week?"

"And each evening have stayed a little later. Why can I not go with you—I would like to go to-night? I used to ride well."

He glanced uneasily at the loose horse.

"There's no saddle for you."

"I have heard of men who were gallant enough to ride bareback and let women have their saddles."

"They were probably the kind who have hearts," he answered with a joking smile; "to-morrow evening, if you still wish to go."

He touched spur to the horse and galloped away. She stood watching them; a dread settled heavily upon her heart. She watched them till they were a mere moving dot on the sand—watched till she could see them no more; turning away with a sharp sigh she spoke unconsciously aloud:

"I wish I had not let them go."

Startled at the sound of her voice in the stillness, she went into the hut and busied herself shaking up the children's bed. She shook each sheet and quilt, that no bit of dust or sand might be left in it. She patted the pillows lovingly and smoothed them with the palms of her hands.

She sat down in the door and waited. The twilight

gathered deeper and duskier, but they did not come. The silence overwhelmed her; it had a million voices.

She waited and waited longer yet. A coyotte came stealing up to the spring; she heard it lap, then its light step as it trotted away, then its sharp bark ending in a long whining howl. A big, long-winged black bird swooped over the spring and flopped away in the gathering night; and the big, round moon rolled up out of the hem of the desert.

She could endure the silence and the suspense no longer. She climbed to the top of the sandhill behind the hut and called and shouted their names until her voice was hoarse. A chorus of coyotte howls was the only answer that came back to her.

Midnight came and they did not return. She alung a canteen of water over her shoulder, caught the loose horse, which for some strange reason had not followed its master, and started on their trail. The brilliancy of the full moon made it possible to follow the tracks in the sand on and on, until in the waning light before the dawn she lost them and slid from her horse and sank down and slept.

A lizard ran across her neck and its scratching feet woke her; it was daylight. The horse stood near, eyeing her with human-like intent. She arose and went away again on the tracks.

The day came hot and grew hotter and hotter. It was noon; the baking sun beat down on her head, her back tingled with innumerable blisters, her brain began to be dazed. She came to a place where the tracks confused her, there was such tramping round and round. She stopped and felt strangely dull and puzzled. A coyotte trotted from a knoll; she looked where it had been and saw something lying on the sand. She dropped heavily down the horse's side and staggered to it. Then such a scream broke the silence as never the desert had heard. One of her children lay dead, its little up-turned face singeing in the sun; its pretty hands crossed on its breast. Its limbs were straightened and its dress wrapped lightly about its knees. It had been laid there after it was dead. She sat down beside it and gathered it to her breast and rocked it to and fro.

"My pretty one, my little one," she murmured, fondling and kissing it as she talked.

Presently she bethought her of the canteen. There was a little water in it; it was hot. She parted the child's lips and poured the water between them; it ran out of the corners of its mouth. She set it up in her lap and smoothed its silky, hot hair and rubbed her cheek against its cheek, then let it go and clasped her hands, making a hoop round it of her arms. The partly stiffened body balanced for a moment on her lap, then fell over. She caught it again to her breast, laughing a wild, terrible laugh, and started back on the track she had come.

* * * * *

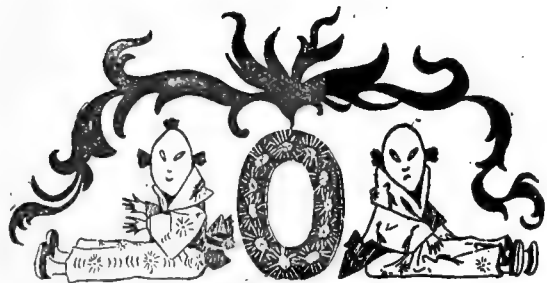
When the grey dawn was fading into light a woman with wild eyes and long, loose-hanging hair, with blistered face and hands and feet, carrying a dead child in her arms, came into the hut by the One Palm Spring and laid it in the bunk in the corner. She crooned hoarsely a sleep song to it. The horse came up to the door.

"Come in," she called to him. "Come in—come in and see the transmigration of souls! Keep still, though—keep still; they are asleep."

* * * * *

One Christmas morning three men awoke in the dawn on the Colorado desert and, shouldering their burden of blankets and fears, trudged onwards through the sand towards the far line of the mountains to the west.





They had hunted the traditional ship on the desert, likewise the tradition Pegieg mine; had lost their outfit and lost their way. Their canteens were empty that morning.

"If it would only rain!"

"Rain? Look at that sky, you could as easily expect rain out of a brass kettle."

They stopped short in their tracks. In the twinkling of an eye the far-off range of mountains stood before them; so near they could see the canyons, and trees, and rocks. They turned their eyes to the south. The glimmering, defiant Ocopah range, towards which so many bleaching skeletons lay headed, stood out boldly straight against the dawn. But what is that nearer thing? The men caught their breath and looked harder southward. High in the air—and so gratefully near—it was a house; before it a giant palm-tree—one solitary palm—in the midst of a green lawn. There was a horse on the lawn, and a woman sat in the door of the house. It all vanished in a moment. In another moment it was there again—the house so impossibly tall, the legs of the horse so grotesquely long. A long straggling grove of mesquit was this time a part of the scene.

The three men hailed it with different expressions.

"Deliverance!"

"A mirage."

"But this kind of mirage always has a reality at the bottom of it. There is a horse on that green stuff; there is a house of some sort, and a woman sitting in the door, just as surely as yon range of mountains actually exists. It may be twenty miles away, but it is there."

Quicker than thought it all vanished. The shafts of the sun had touched the sand.

Several hours later, three weary, thirsty men, toiling round the end of a long bluff of sand, stopped and shouted simultaneously:

"There!"

"Look there!"

"Look!"

There, right before their eager eyes, was the place the mirage had shown them: The woman still sat in the door, the horse still stood on the lawn. They felt awed, they knew not why. Nearer, the green lawn was a long irregular patch of coarse grass and yerba mansa; the house, a mere mud-walled hut, roofed with poles, from which hung tattered remnants of cloth.

But the woman sat in the door. She leant against the side of it. They could see her—see her attitude of expectancy as plainly as they had seen her in the mirage.

The grove of mesquit began just a little way from the hut.

The men talked:

"Enough beans on that grove to feast a whole tribe of Indians."

"If I were a great artist I would paint that scene and call it 'Waiting.'"

"No need to name it; every one who saw it would know its name."

"That woman is waiting for some man, I'll bet."

They lowered their voices.

"Maybe she is alone and afraid of us."

"I wouldn't blame her to be."

They stepped round the wide-spread palm and stood before the woman. Then they took off their hats and bowed their heads in silence.

It was a corpse in shreds of a dress.

H. T. M.

A GREAT SCHEME.

HOW TO GET ANY BOOK YOU WANT.

WE are constantly receiving complaints from readers that we do not devise competitions in which everybody can enter.

It is difficult to do this—to give everybody an equal chance of success.

However, we think we have hit upon something this time.

Every week we shall give away half-a-dozen books.

All a competitor has to do is to send us one Book Coupon cut from *The Sunday Reader*, one from the *Athletic Record*, and one from *Short Stories*.

Send these to us in one envelope together with a request for any single book in the whole world of literature.

From the applications we receive we shall each week pick out six and send the books asked for.

If you are not successful one week, keep on trying, you are bound to be successful some week.

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Please let me have:

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Jack Ramsden, 176, Albemarle Street, Ashton-under-Lyne. "Poems by Walt Whitman." 10s. 6d.

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Arthur Bailey, 15, Archer Street, Osmaston, near Derby. "King Solomon's Mines." By Rider Haggard. 6s.

DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL.

THE FUNNIEST MAN ALIVE WILL RUN
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HALFPENNY.

HOW EVERYBODY MAY STAY AT HOME AND
LAUGH WITH THE WORLD'S GREAT
LAUGH-MAKER.

FULL PARTICULARS OF THE BIGGEST
COMIC SCHEME THAT EVER ENTERED
INTO THE MIND OF MAN.

As the historian of the future will some day come to us wanting to know how DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL originated, it is just as well to put the plain facts of the case in evidence at the outset.

We were thoroughly worn out one day recently with Christmas Numbers, competitions, printer's devils, and other editorial nightmares, and when the day's work was done, took an evening off instead of going home.

Chance sent us to Drury Lane Theatre. From the time Dan Leno first came on the stage till the curtain came down we simply sat there and roared. Roared and shrieked and howled, and should have become a disgusting nuisance to everybody around us if everybody around us had not been kept busy howling, shrieking, and roaring also.

The great laugh-maker of the English stage set old Drury ringing with delirious merriment.

It was honest laughter, born of clean wit and clever capers, and the thought, in some strange way, came into our mind that if Dan Leno could be distributed throughout the country, the country would be the better and the happier for it.

Then we went hot and cold in turns, for we saw how this thing could be done.

Five minutes later we were in Dan Leno's dressing-room, discussing the matter with him.

That is how DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL came about.

In a week or two's time it will flood the country—flood every country where the English language is spoken.

There will be no paper in the world like DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL.

It will carry boisterous laughter wherever it goes; it will be the best tonic for a jaded mind; it will be the most reliable doctor to those who are run down; it will, indeed, be the best friend any man can have.

Fun will be its key-note.

It will be the most comic of comic papers.

Those who look for instruction in its pages will look in vain; they will only find genuine and hearty fun—fun everywhere.

Every week Dan Leno will romp and scamper through the illustrated pages of his COMIC JOURNAL; every week he will tell in his own delightful way of the many funny things he has seen, and heard, and done.

All of you have heard of Dan Leno, most of you have seen him and admire him, many of you swear by him and love him.

In future he will take each and every one of you by the hand, as he has never been able to do before, and call you friend, and you will look with longing and pleasure for his weekly visit.

And think what this means!

Was there ever such a thing heard of before?

Here is the funniest man you know coming every week to chat and yarn and laugh with you, and only charge you two farthings for the pleasure of it.

If the people of Great Britain do not rise in their millions and show their appreciation by reading the COMIC JOURNAL, we shall know what to think of them—nothing very satisfactory, let us tell you.

Go to your newsagent now—without delay—tell him DAN LENO'S COMIC JOURNAL is coming out, and tell him, too, that if he fails to keep a copy for you every week, he does so at the peril of his life.

Next week, Dan Leno will say a few words himself, and also tell you the date when the first number will appear—some time this month.

YOUR CHARACTER FROM YOUR HANDWRITING.

To amuse and at the same time to interest our readers we have retained the services of the most expert graphologist of the present day, and even those who do not believe in the art will soon find themselves convinced if they care to send along a specimen of their handwriting upon an unruled sheet of paper with their usual signature and full address. From this their characters will be told. These characters will not necessarily be flattering. They will be bare statements of the truth. In each case six stamps and a stamped, addressed envelope must be inclosed. All letters should be marked "Graphologist," and forwarded to Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

THE SHIFTING SAND.

I HAD been knocking about the mountains for several weeks, when one evening I found myself in front of a little cabin nestling at the foot of a great mountain, and facing a level stretch of sandy plain dotted with clumps of sage-brush. My horses were tired from an unusually hard day's jaunt, and I was so weary of the solitude of the great trees and hills, and the monotony of self-communion, that I was very glad to pitch camp for the night in a place that promised human companionship.

Dismounting, I removed the saddle from the animal I had been riding, and was busy untying the cords which bound my camp outfit to the other, when I noticed both animals prick up their ears and look intently across the plain. Turning in that direction, I saw coming slowly towards me the figure of a man—an old man apparently, for his long hair and longer beard were snowy white, and his tall form was bent, as with the weight of years. He was dressed in the ordinary garb of a miner—heavy high-top boots, blue denim overall and "jumper," and broad-brimmed white hat. In one hand he carried a long staff, which he occasionally thrust sharply into the sand as he advanced, pausing frequently for a backward glance across the plain.

When he had drawn nearer, I noticed that his staff was peculiarly shod with a long, sharp piece of steel. He was within a few yards of where I stood, when, turning from a last backward glance, his eyes met mine; deep-set, penetrating eyes, looking out from beneath heavy white eyebrows, and taking in with one quick glance my whole array of intruding forces.

I am not by nature a timid man, and years of frontier life have given me an assurance which seldom deserts me; but I do not mind confessing that, as I looked into those eyes, I felt decidedly uneasy as to my reception. I knew instinctively that I stood in the presence of no ordinary backwoodsman, whose rude hospitality belongs to every wayfarer by the right of an unwritten law of frontier etiquette. The cordial note of his rich voice, as he bade me "good evening," reassured me so much, however, that I asked permission to stay all night, hastening to add my name, address, and occupation. He readily assented, and, after showing me where to picket my horses, led the way into the cabin, where he soon prepared a supper to which I did the full justice of a keen appetite.

When the table had been cleared away, and a fresh log laid upon the fire, I got out my pipe and tobacco, offering my host some of the latter, which he accepted; and we were soon chatting together with that cordial good-fellowship peculiar to men under the influence of the seductive weed. I had confided to him my mania for "prospecting," still persistent after years of fruitless efforts to "strike it rich;" and there had fallen between us a short silence, during which I allowed my thought to drift away to a sweet-faced woman whom I had loved silently, hopelessly, for so many years.

Suddenly my host's voice recalled me to the present. "A mania you called it," he was saying; "and rightly, too, as are all other forms of our greed for gold. Heaven knows no one can realise this truth more bitterly than I!"

The weariness in his voice impressed me painfully. As the lighted match which he held to his pipe flared up, I noted with new interest the deep-set eyes, out of which all gladness had gone, the fine, shapely head, with its crown of snowy hair, the broad sweep of white forehead, and the rugged lines of the face, which must have been handsome in youth. I was speculating as to what his story might be—for that he had a story that set him apart from the common run of men, everything about him plainly declared—when he took his pipe from his mouth, and, without preface or apology, began:

"I have lived in this cabin for eighteen years, never leaving it except for semi-annual visits to the little town across the mountains for my supplies. Eighteen years ago this month I discovered a rich ledge, bearing gold and silver, up the mountain side about a mile. I had high hopes and worked hard, for I possessed the mightiest incentive that can nerve a man to wrest a fortune from fate—a loving little woman back in England awaited my return. Her father, a wealthy, hard-headed old farmer, disapproved of me on general principles, but especially because of my poverty. When I had £2,000 in cash, he said, I might claim her for my wife. We believed the condition equivalent to a refusal of my suit, for the toiling and saving of a lifetime would scarcely win that much money from the few stony acres I possessed. But youth is hopeful and resourceful; so I left my sweetheart, who promised, amid her tears, to be faithful till death, and started for the golden West. I had poor success, however, and at the end of five years was little better off than when I left home. Then it was that I stumbled quite accidentally upon the ledge up the mountain side, so accidentally that I believed it nothing short of providential. Poor fool!"

He laughed bitterly, and then sat watching the smoke which curled in fantastic wreaths from his pipe.

"For some time I worked as seldom men worked before, as man can work only when buoyed up by such hopes as were mine. But I was soon forced to the conclusion that I must have assistance and machinery to develop my mine, both of which required capital—and that I did not have. One day I set out on foot across the mountain in search of someone who would advance the necessary capital for an interest in my mine. You may be sure that it was only after a severe struggle that I brought myself to this step.

"In the first place, I was so greedy for gold that I dreaded sharing the profits with anyone else; and, on the other hand, it was no easy matter to induce anyone to invest in a quartz mine, for this section was then mad on placer mining. Upon reaching town I went straight to the post-office, where, as I expected, I found a letter from my sweetheart. I carried it unopened to my room at the hotel, and sat down to read it, thinking that it would give me new courage for my quest."

The old man paused. Something in his voice kept me silent, too, though I longed to question him as to the outcome of his story. Suddenly he roused himself from his reverie and continued as abruptly as he had ceased.

"I need not tell you that my letter contained a story as old as love itself—the story of woman's faithlessness. It put out the light of my life at one cruel blow. I did not heed the protestations, all blotted with her tears; I grasped only the one vital point, that she was no longer mine to win, since she had yielded her vows to a richer man; and the bitterness of this blinded me to all else. All night long I sat with the letter in my hand, and when morning came I started for home, following the instinct which leads the wounded animal back to its familiar haunts to die.

"For a long, long time I lay in my little bunk yonder, praying for death, and then there grew in my mind the suggestion of suicide. In a stupid way I reviewed all the routes to eternity at my disposal; but with the fastidiousness of a sick brain, I rejected them, one after another. There was my rifle or my hunting knife, but the thought of their bloody mutilation turned me sick. Then there was a rope, and there," pointing to the stout beam over our heads, "was the impromptu gallows."

At this gruesome suggestion I could not repress a shudder, and was glad that my tell-tale face was hidden by the gathering gloom.

"But I was something of a gentleman in my youth, and hanging was too suggestive of the felon to be pleasant. I got up at last, and dragged myself outside the cabin. Sitting in the sunshine, I lifted my eyes to the westward, and then leapt to my feet, shouting for insane joy. A great bank of grey clouds lay almost touching the mountain tops, and in those clouds was the solution of my death problem. I was mad, you see."

He refilled and relighted his pipe before proceeding. "You noticed this evening the level stretch of plain to the eastward. The soil is loose, light sand, and the terrific winds which occasionally sweep down over the mountains play mad pranks with it. Great hills and hollows are piled up and scooped out, familiar landmarks are obliterated, and new ones uncovered to-day, and to-morrow the inconstant wind will undo its work, leaving the plain as level as a floor. In the bank of clouds I saw the promise of one of these periodical storms, and like an inspiration to my muddled brain came the idea of fashioning myself a grave, in which I could lie down, allowing the wind to wrap me deeply in a winding-sheet of sand. To think was to act. With a nervous energy, born of madness, I seized a spade and hastened out on the plain."

The old man got up and went to the door. The full moon had climbed well up the heavens, shedding a soft, weird glory over the plain.

"It wasn't far, just out yonder, at the foot of a giant sage-bush that I chose the spot for my grave."

I had risen and stood beside him, looking out across the sand, dotted with numberless sage-bushes, lifting their stunted limbs to the sky. I had no idea which particular shrub he meant, but the awesome story, and his motionless, intent attitude, which recalled his frequent halting and backward glances, as I had watched him coming across the plain in the evening, kept me dumb. He stood thus some time, and then, with a deep sigh, resumed his seat; but I dropped down upon the doorstep; the moonlight was pleasanter than the ghostly shadows of the cabin.

"I worked rapidly, pausing for an occasional reassuring glance at the bank of clouds. I had scooped out the sand to a depth of, perhaps, three feet, when the point of my spade unexpectedly came in contact with a hard surface."

"The bed rock?" I ventured, as the old man stopped short, as though overcome by the memories he had invoked.

"No—and this was what surprised, almost terrified me. I knew that the sand was from ten to twenty feet deep, and that it was impossible that I could have reached bed rock so close to the surface. Carefully pushing the point of my spade about, I found that the obstruction was apparently circular, and perhaps three feet in diameter. A few moments' work cleared away the intervening sand, disclosing a flat, round rock.

"Using my spade, I lifted the rock slowly from its resting-place, and perhaps you can imagine my surprise when I uncovered the dark mouth of a well. I am not naturally a physical coward, but my nerves were so unstrung by all that had gone before, that it was several minutes before I could bring myself to investigate this unexpected development of my grave. At last, however, I secured a pitch stick from the cabin for a torch, and returned to follow this new 'lead' to its conclusion.

"Thrusting the lighted stick into the opening, I found that the well was about four feet deep, and that the sides were walled with rough stones fitted together without mortar. At the bottom, on one side, was a small opening. Lowering myself into the well, I thrust the torch ahead and cautiously crawled through this opening, to find myself in a small chamber, high enough to admit of my standing upright. The walls of the chamber were of the same rude masonry as the well, while the ceiling was composed of stout poles, laid closely together and resting upon the stone walls. Raising the torch above my head, I made a rapid survey.

"Scattered about the floor were rude implements of stone, specimens of primitive pottery, small jars, covered and uncovered, bows and arrows of gaily painted wood, arrow heads, and spear points. I knew at once that I was standing in an ancient Indian grave, and was, therefore, partly prepared for the ghastly picture which was revealed when the light of the torch put the host of lurking shadows to flight. Sitting bolt upright against the farther wall, grotesquely hideous with feathers and other savage adornments, and wrapped about with gaudy robes falling away from the skeleton forms in decaying tatters, were three figures. It was not a pleasant sight, nor one I cared to look upon—the dark faces with their rows of shining teeth, from which the withered lips were drawn in sardonic grins, and the staring caverns, which the flickering light filled with phantom eyes.

"I turned again, with idle curiosity, to the pottery. Pushing off the cover of the jar nearest me, I cautiously thrust my hand into the mouth, and lifted it full to the light; and then I dropped upon my knees, staring stupidly at the glittering heap of yellow sand in my open palm, asking myself if I were dreaming. Ounces of pure, bright gold. As the stupendous fact worked itself through my bewildered brain, I laughed aloud, moving from jar to jar. All told the same story, save two; gold, and full almost to the brim. Gold enough for a king's ransom, and all mine for the taking. And then upon my elation broke the flood of my misery. I was rich now, but, oh, Heaven, of what use? With the irony of an accursed fiend, fortune had waited until I was ready to die, until my hopes were already dead, and then overwhelmed me with her golden shower. I raved and swore until I was exhausted, and then fell prone upon the floor, overcome by my passion. Presently I grew calmer. The storm of my rage had

carried away with it all pain and disappointment. The basilisk glitter of the gold had got into my eyes, conjuring into life another sort of demon than despair. I was rich, and riches meant much; more than love or happiness, perhaps. Riches meant power—and revenge. I could go back to my old home and live like a prince, *her* next door-neighbour. Many things come to him who has the patience to wait and the money to do. I had both, and would be ready when the time came to pay off her father, her husband, herself in the Devil's coin of hate, and debt I owed them.

"So I gloated over my suddenly acquired wealth, and my wild imaginings of revenge, till the charnel-house air of the chamber extinguished my torch, leaving me in Egyptian darkness. With a muttered oath at my stupidity, I flung the useless stick away, and groping about, caught up one of the precious jars, and worked my way to the opening. It was no easy task without a light, and I was very glad to find myself at last in the well, still holding the jar against my chest.

"When I lifted my face above the opening of the well, I was greeted with a blinding, biting shower of sand. The storm, which was to have been my sexton, had come, and, as if to punish me for my defection, buffeted me most cruelly. Carefully replacing the cover to the well, after I had climbed out, I lifted my jar of gold in my arms and started for the cabin. The sky was overcast, and the blinding, whirling sheets of sand so bewildered and exhausted me that once or twice I thought I should have to give up trying to reach shelter. At last, however, I stumbled across the threshold of this room, more dead than alive, and I believe I never before or since was so glad to get inside these four walls.

"All night long the wind raged with a fury I have never known since in the long years of my residence here. When morning came, my first thought was of my treasure-house. I hastily dressed and stepped outside. The sun was just above the horizon, smiling genially upon the quiet landscape, which somehow looked very strange to my anxious eyes, as they sought the particular sage-bush which marked the entrance to the grave. Not a landmark could I see. With fiendish malignity the wind had effaced every familiar bush, and hillock, and ravine. The plain lay glittering in the sunlight, a grey, level, interminable waste of sand. I returned to the cabin disappointed and chagrined, but not uneasy; and thinking myself lucky to have fetched one jar with me, I stooped and stroked its ugly sides with a miser's tenderness. Then, to reassure myself by a sight of the yellow dust, I put my hand into the jar and lifted it full to the light.

"I think I went mad again for a moment, for when I came to myself I was standing over the shattered jar, looking down upon its scattered contents, which twinkled in the patch of sunlight from the open door—white, red and yellow beads! In the darkness I had got hold of one of the only two jars in the grave which did not contain gold."

"But surely you found the grave again?" I said.

The old man shook his head.

"From that day to this I have been searching for the entrance to the grave. I have gone over every foot of yon sand. Storms have swept over it, casting up and tearing down hillocks, covering and uncovering sage-brush! but never once revealing the secret held fast in the shifting sand. Day after day, armed with my steel-shod pole, I've sought so fruitlessly that I should be tempted to believe the whole thing a delusion of my

over-wrought mind, were it not for the shattered jar and the beads which I have in my cupboard. I cannot tear myself away from the accursed search, which has grown to be a mania that nothing but death can cure."

The sky had become overcast as he ceased, and the soft sighing of the pines told of a rising wind.

"It is going to blow to-night, and that means no sleep for me," said my host, arousing me as from a dream, after a long silence; "but you are tired, and I have thoughtlessly kept you awake. Let me show you where to make your bed."

I was soon stretched between blankets and left alone to sleep. But the strange story to which I had just listened had so impressed me that for hours I lay awake, thinking how curiously the man's early history coincided with my own. The mania for gold, the incentive to treasure hunting—love for a beautiful woman—the exile to the mountains, all were the same; only in my case the woman loved was bound to me by no spoken tie.

Years ago I vowed that I would never ask Agnes to be my wife until I had made a fitting home for her, and it had been this apparently hopeless ambition that had sent me away to the mountains, where I determined to remain until either death or fortune cured me of my mania. To-night, as I lay revolving in my mind every detail in the story of my host, I felt that death alone would effect the cure.

Just as I sank into a slight slumber a lusty halloo shook my drowsy senses, then voices and the tramping of horses broke irregularly into the softer monotony of the rising wind, and presently my host entered with someone, who, like myself, spread his blankets upon the floor, and then, lulled by the wind, I fell fast asleep.

When I awoke the sun was streaming in at the open door of the cabin. Leisurely dressing myself, I went outside to look after my horses, and met the stranger, a prospector, like myself. As we exchanged words of greeting, my eyes travelled carelessly across the plain until they were arrested by an object lying at the foot of a giant shrub, an object so like the figure of a man that I broke off what I was saying and ran swiftly towards it, with a strange fear tugging at my heart.

Lying on his back, his white face upturned to the smiling sky, I found my old host, his madness cured at last. Grasped firmly in both hands, and lying partly across his dead body, was the steel-shod pole, the point of which was thrust deeply into the loose sand. Together, the stranger and I carried him into the cabin, and then I went to bring the coroner from the settlement across the mountain.

As the last rays of the setting sun slanted across the fateful plain, we buried him close by his cabin door, with the crumpled, time-seared letter from his sweet-heart hidden over his peaceful heart. The coroner took possession of his effects, among which we found the broken jar and the beads. The next morning we separated and went our several ways. For two days I travelled, and then a thought, which had haunted me ever since I found the old man lying dead, caused me to retrace my steps; my suspicions proved correct. I found that the point of his staff had touched a rock, the entrance to his long sought treasure-house, and the shock of joy had killed him. The interior of the grave was as he had described it to me, and—but why go into details? Fortune, not death, cured my mania and satisfied my ambitions. A month later I was married to Agnes.

C. C. ORSDALL.



By
GEORGE
GRIFFITH.

*Author of "Val-
dar the Oft-
Born," "Briton
or Boer?"
"The Outlaws
of the Air,"
etc., etc.*

CHAPTER XXXV. A CHANGE OF COURSE.

WHEN Lorrain came on deck the next morning at day-break he found the *Minnehaha* spinning along over a smooth sea, out of sight of land and absolutely alone on the face of the waters. He looked at the compass and saw that she was heading south-east, from which he concluded that she had cleared the island and was making straight for the Mid-Atlantic. Captain Peters was already on deck, so he took the opportunity of telling him of the change in his plans and taking his opinion on his scheme for despoiling the treasure ships of the new *El Dorado*.

The little skipper walked beside him one or two turns in silence, twisting his goatee and looking straight down at the deck. Then he stepped to the rail, sent a stream of tobacco juice into the water, dropped a well masticated quid after it—very early morning was the only time he allowed himself the nautical luxury of a chew—and came back and said:

"By the Great Snake, Seenyor, you *have* a head on you, if you'll excuse me saying so. Now I call that just one of the daisiest schemes that a man, a real genius, could think of. Piracy—waal, yes, I guess that's about the size of it, but anyhow we might as well run the Roger up now as anything else. If we're caught we'll just be sunk on sight and that's all there is in it. But as I said before, Seenyor, I'm yours to command while the wages are paid regular, and if there's any galoot aboard that makes any difficulty about obeying my orders I'll make things so difficult for him that he won't find living worth while.

"Yes, it's a great scheme, and I'm proud to work for a man who could think a thing like that out. And what sort of a show do I think we've got? Just about the same as the old fellows had in their day, as far as I can see. You see, we go by steam nowadays instead of sail, and we have handier shooting-irons, and as long as we can steam faster than anything that's sent to chase us and shoot straighter and hit harder than the others, I don't see why

we shouldn't have just as good a show as Kidd or Morgan or Blue-Nosed Jake or the best of them.

"Of course, it's only reasonable to allow that there'll be an end of it and us sometime, but that's got to happen anyway, and if we have a good time in between I don't see that there's very much to howl about. We shall want another dozen or so white men on board, but we can pick them up as we go up the West Coast. Callao and Guayaquil and Panama are not bad places either for signing on hard cases who'll do most things for being paid. There'll be plenty of tramps lying around handy on the way to get coal from, and we've ammunition enough on board for a whole naval war, so as far as ship and crew's concerned, Seenyor, you can look on it as settled."

"Very well," said Lorrain when the skipper had completed his review of the situation. "Of course, I shall leave all the details to you. Now I want to get that half-bred little greaser out of the way. I'm pretty certain that he's been playing a double game with us, and certainly those two crusiers could not have turned up at Samana Bay unless they had known where we were going, so somebody must have told them—and that somebody must have been Don Grogorio or Madame Sybil. I think you said the other day that you wouldn't mind seeing the lady a widow?"

"That's so, Seenyor. I've led a pretty lonely and wild life so far, and you know, sir, however fond a man may be of fighting and knocking around the odd corners of the earth money-hunting, there are times when his heart aches, as I believe the poets say, for the sweetness of love and the charms of female companionship. I believe that's how they put it, and anyhow it comes to that. I've seen one or two fine women here and there about the earth, but, by Josh, sir, this lady goes over 'em easily, and if she's got to put the weeds of widowhood on—waal—sir—I'll help her to do it, just as slick as I'll help her to take 'em off again."

"That's the first time I've heard you deviate into sentiment, Captain Peters," laughed Lorrain, "but I'm very glad the arrangement meets with your approval. I'm going to get married myself on the first opportunity, so we may as well make a double wedding of it. I shall leave it to you to talk Madame Sybil over. Of course, if she should have the bad taste to make any objections, I dare say you'll find means to persuade her. I give you quite a free hand, you know, only, for Lady Pendril's sake, we can't have any well-irregularities on board. I see no reason why even piracy should not be kept respectable. We'll run into Rio and get the ceremonies performed in the proper way, or perhaps we might pick a parson out of some ship we want to borrow coal from on the way. I don't care what it is so long as we put the business through in order. And now, what are we going to do with this wretched little greaser?"

"Hanging's short and handy, Seenyor, but it's a bit violent when there are ladies around. Now, as we've started pirating, what's your opinion of doing things in the good old style and marrooning him?"

"Curiously enough," said Lorrain, "that was just what I

intended to do with Mr. and Mrs. Tristram—or at any rate Mr.—if I could once have got them safe on board the yacht. It was in my mind to take them down to Trinidad, you know the one I mean, down south off the coast of Brazil where there's a fine healthy breed of land-crabs."

"You've got it again, Seenyor," said the little skipper, looking up with an ugly glint in his eyes. "That's it. His keep won't cost much coming down, for we shall be there in a few days, and it's a place I've always wanted to get ashore on. I suppose you know there are all sorts of stories going around about pirate's treasures buried in it. It used to be a great place two or three hundred years ago by all accounts, and perhaps we could spare a few days for a hunt round."

"Not at all a bad idea, Captain," said Lorrain. "I don't see why the fishes should enjoy our mutual friend any more than the land-crabs. We have plenty of time before the rivers open up north, so I don't see why we couldn't afford a few days at Trinidad. I'll tell General Gregorio that he is respited for the present, and meanwhile you can amuse yourself by making the running with Madame Sybil. That will be a little entertainment for him as well as for you. Altogether, I think we shall be a very jolly party, and if Madame Sybil is inclined to be unreasonable you can tell her what we are going to do with the General, and ask whether she'd prefer to amuse herself with him and the land-crabs on Trinidad. I think when she sees the crabs she'll prefer you."

Captain Peters looked up rather dubiously, as though he didn't consider Lorrain's last remark in the very best of taste. Then he looked down again and laughed and said:

"Waal, I'm free to allow, Seenyor, that I have seen bigger and handsomer men than me, though I haven't met a better one yet in a scrap; but I'm not figuring on any woman who's taken up with that half-baked little greaser giving me the mitten. No, sir! If she does, by Josh, I'll take her ashore at Trinidad, and introduce her to the best assortment of land-crabs I can find, and ask her what she thinks of them."

At this moment her ladyship came on deck, and Lorrain left the skipper to tell her of the change in Don Gregorio's fate, and about the stories of buried treasure on Trinidad.

"You couldn't possibly have a better chance of using the Magnet," he said, "although, of course, we shall have to do it quietly together. If you do find anything and we dig it up, it will be the finest thing possible—not only in the financial sense either. I will let it get about among the crew that you possess some magical quality of going straight to wherever gold is hidden, just as those fellows who find water are supposed to have, and they'll call you the Gold-Finder, and they'll worship you and do anything for you. In fact it'll make you an absolutely ideal pirate queen."

"That's capital!" said her ladyship. "Though I must say I think it's hard lines on that wretched little President. It must be much nicer to be hung or shot at once, than left alone in a horrible place like that to starve to death or be eaten alive. Ugh! What an end—to have pieces pulled off you, until there's nothing but the bones left. Well, I came to tell you that coffee's ready."

For the next week the voyage southward proceeded without event, although there was a good deal of work done on board the *Minnehaha*. Her white hull was painted black with a gold band running along under the rail. Her name was changed to the *Circe*, to agree with a convenient duplicate set of papers. A couple of yards were manufactured out of spare spars and slung on the foremast, giving her more of a brigantine look, and the damaged funnel was cut away and the draught led under the deck into the forward one. Her armament was stowed away, and her whole appearance was so utterly changed that if the *Pocahontas* herself had hove in sight she would not have recognised her.

When she was alone she steamed at twenty-five knots so long as the sea was anything like smooth, as it practically always was, but when she fell in with any of the numerous

craft bound for the South American ports she at once slowed down and trundled along at a respectable twelve or fourteen knots.

Don Gregorio had wanted to clasp Lorrain's knees and weep over his shoes when he told him that he was not going to hang him. But when he went on to tell him that he was going to make him monarch *pro tem* of Trinidad and king of the land-crabs he nearly escaped, his fate by a fit of apoplexy, and when he got out of that he raged and raved and wept himself into a state bordering on insanity. He was a hopeless glutton, and as Lorrain took an unholy pleasure in inviting him to the saloon table he made the best of his few remaining opportunities, and got fatter and greasier every day, in spite of the unpleasant remarks which his persecutor let fall every now and then about the kind consideration that he was showing for his future companions on the island.

Her ladyship and Lorrain, meanwhile, were highly diverted by the rapidly developing courtship of Captain Peters. Hard in business, perfect in his profession, and utterly pitiless and unscrupulous as he was in a fight, he seemed for the time being a completely changed man. Until now he had been somewhat careless as to his outward appearance, but now he arrayed himself in the whitest of duck and drill adorned with the brightest of gold lace and brass buttons. He shaved twice a day instead of once every three days, and used the most atrocious language if his boy brought him his pipe-clayed shoes with a speck of anything like dust or dirt on them. Then he brought out a banjo, which he could tinkle with no mean skill, and in the moonlit hours of the middle watch at night he would sing plantation love-songs in a voice like the sighing of steam from an escape-pipe.

At first Madame Sybil had no notion that all this was meant for her, and her ladyship, who treated her with the most consistent politeness and cordiality, took very good care not to enlighten her. She had dropped the President completely, and regarded the terrible fate that was in store for him with apparently absolute indifference, which might perhaps have been modified somewhat had she known of the choice that she would soon be called upon to make.

But one night—it was the night before the yacht was due to arrive at Trinidad—her ladyship arranged it so that Captain Peters should find her alone after dinner on the quarter deck, and the skipper, as he described it to Lorrain afterwards, just saw the coast clear and sailed in. It must be admitted that he was considerably nervous at first, but when Madame Sybil had grasped his meaning and had turned on him in a sudden tempest of scorn and anger, his courage came back instantly. Lorrain had strengthened his hands by telling him of the share she had had in Sir Harry Viney's murder, and so he bluntly put it to her that, if there was any condescension at all in the matter, it was on his side when he offered to give, as he put it, his name and honour into the keeping of a woman who ought to have been hanged some years before.

This only produced more fury, followed by tears and then, unheeding both, and telling her if she didn't sit still he'd hold her or send for a sailor to tie her up to the rail, he proceeded to calmly expound the advantages or disadvantages which would attend her acceptance or refusal of his offer. Then he left her speechless with fear and horror, for she knew that she had not a friend on board, and that Lorrain would leave her on the desolate rocks of Trinidad to the mercy of the land-crabs with every bit as little compunction as he would leave Don Gregorio.

Later on her ladyship joined her on deck and then, strange as was the relationship between them, the natural sympathy of sex asserted itself and, in a perfect torment of remorse and fear, she laid the whole of her guilty soul bare before her and implored her pity and help.

Unhappily, however, her confession included certain revelations about Lorrain which instantly hardened her ladyship's heart, although they made no change in her outer

demeanour. She sympathised and remonstrated with her in the same breath, and did both very nicely, but she could give her no better comfort than such as lay in a contrast between her fate with Don Gregorio on Trinidad and her lot as the wife of Captain Peters, drawn very much in favour of the latter.

The next morning everyone was on deck by sunrise, looking ahead at a blue-grey mass rising rapidly out of the waters ahead. Don Gregorio was grovelling for the last time at Lorrain's feet, praying for mercy, and Madame Sybil was thinking of the creeping horrors crawling about among those distant rocks of Trinidad and making up her mind that, after all, Captain Hiram Peters was not quite so loathsome as they were.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A TRAGEDY AND A TREASURE HUNT.

CONDITIONS of space as well as considerations of humanity combine at this point in the narrative to render necessary the drawing of a veil over the hideous fate of the miserable Don Gregorio. He was a man thoroughly bad and base, and, as we know, more than one murder could be justly laid to his charge. He was thus doubly and trebly deserving of death—but such a death! A death whose unutterable horror could be mitigated only by madness, even if by that—it is doubtful whether any crime or accumulation of crime could merit such a fate at the hands of human justice. But there was no idea of justice in the cold-blooded, calculating cruelty of those who handed him over to his horrible executioners. It had only two objects—revenge and terror, and both these were amply gratified.

Madame Sybil was taken on shore in the same boat as the victim, who was already reduced to a state bordering on idiocy, but no sooner did she see the first of the awful creatures come crawling out of their holes among the rocks which strewed the little valley that is their particular haunt, than she went into violent hysterics and had to be carried back, screaming to the boat. Lorrain left Captain Peters to arrange the details of the execution, as he put it, and after bidding an ironical farewell to his almost unconscious victim, he landed from a second boat with her ladyship and four sailors armed with heavy clubs and carrying provisions for the day, and set out across the narrow beach towards a rugged goat-path which appeared to lead to the interior of the island.

The sailors went a little ahead, two on each side beating back the land-crabs which were now beginning to swarm out on the beach as though to repel the invaders of their domain. Her ladyship clung to Lorrain's arm and stumbled along with closed eyes, until they reached the bottom of the path. She was half helped, half carried, up this to the top of the first ridge where the ground became more practicable, and then Lorrain told two of the sailors to go back to the boat and the other two to remain on watch till he returned. Then he took one of the clubs and a satchel of provisions, and set out with her ladyship to explore the interior of the island, which, as the reader is probably aware, is of volcanic origin with a summit broken up into little circular valleys or depressions not unlike ancient craters.

As soon as they were out of sight of the two sailors her ladyship took the Magnet out of its usual hiding-place in her hair, attached a thread to it, and held it out at arm's length. It wavered about aimlessly, swinging to and fro in the wind and betraying no signs of attraction. Then they began their walk again, taking the easiest ground, and this led in the direction of the northern side of the island. They wandered about for a couple of hours or so, without the Magnet giving any indication of the presence of gold, and then Lorrain suggested that they should sit down and have a sandwich and a glass of wine.

They found a shady spot under an overhanging ledge of rock, and while they were sitting there eating and drinking, with no apparent concern for the ghastly tragedy that was

about to be enacted on the beach below, her ladyship pointed to the other side of the little circular valley, from the top of which the ledge jutted out, and said:

"Doesn't it look as if there had once been some steps over there? D'you see—leading up round the corner of that big black rock."

"I believe you're right," said Lorrain, getting up. "Perhaps your ladyship's sharp eyes have found the way to what we're looking for. I'll go and explore."

He went across the valley and examined the place narrowly. Then he beckoned to her and called out:

"There has been a way up here to somewhere. We may as well find out where it leads to."

She followed him. He took her hand, and they climbed up a rugged, broken half-path, half-stairway, which became more and more like a stairway the higher they got. It was evidently very old and had not been trodden for many years, for the dust that lay thick on it showed no signs of footsteps. It led them up round the shoulder of a huge mass of rock, but still the Magnet gave no sign. They scrambled on higher still till they found themselves level with the ledge under which they had been sitting, and from where they stood they could see that a narrow cleft opened in the rocks immediately above it.

"That doesn't look unlike the entrance to one of the pirate caves that I used to read about in the days when I never thought of going into the business myself, much and all as I yearned to do so," said Lorrain, pointing towards it. "Let us go and see if the Magnet will say anything there."

They made their way along a faintly indicated path which ended on the ledge itself. Here her ladyship held out the needle again at arm's length, and to their delight it swung steadily in the direction of the cleft.

"There it is!" exclaimed Lorrain, striding towards the fissure. "There's the pirates' treasure-house, if we can only find the way in."

The cleft was only about 6ft. wide and some 30ft. deep, narrowing and sloping slightly towards the end. The floor was covered with loose rubble and dust, and there was nothing from end to end of the fissure to show that it had been disturbed by any work of man since the island had existed.

But the wonderful instrument in her ladyship's right hand proved that this was not the case, for the farther she advanced down the cleft the more steadily it inclined downwards until, when they were stopped by a blank wall of rock at the end, it pointed down at an angle of about sixty degrees and remained steady.

"There's gold somewhere down there," said Lorrain, "and that's enough for us at present. We shall want tools and perhaps drills and dynamite to find the way in, so we may as well get back and have them brought. I'll tell the men a nice little fairy-tale about the way in which you were led straight to it by that wonderful instinct of yours, and when they find it they'll just worship you. They were a little bit disappointed about Don Christoval's treasure-chest, but if they find anything worth having here, you'll be able to do anything with them afterwards. We shan't have much difficulty in getting as many recruits as we want after this."

"No," she said, "I don't suppose we shall. What a pity it is that we couldn't just have gone gold-hunting in a quiet and respectable way without having to become pirates."

"That is entirely due to Mr. Tristram's unwarrantable interference," replied Lorrain as they turned away. "I hope that some of those shells which we managed to land on board the *Pocahontas* relieved him permanently of the necessity for gold-hunting."

"It would serve him quite right," said her ladyship, with a bit of a snap in her voice. "It was all his fault. They fired on us first. I shouldn't be very sorry to hear that they're all gone to the bottom together. They'd have sent us there if they could have done."

"A sentiment well worthy of the future Pirate Queen!" laughed Lorrain. "At any rate we must have hit them pretty hard, but if we haven't sunk them they'll soon hear of our doings on the Alaskan coast, and then we may have the chance of another brush with them. Now, I wonder if I can make those two fellows hear."

He took a whistle out of his pocket and blew a long call on it, which was answered by a faint "Ahoy!" from the rocks to the southward. Then the form of one of the sailors appeared on the top of a ridge making signals to them with his arms. In half-an-hour or so they had reached the top of the path leading to the beach, and Lorrain took her ladyship straight to the boat and sent her off to the yacht. As she was crossing the beach guarded by the sailors sounds reached her ears from a little cove at the other end of it, hidden from view by a row of rocks, which caused her to give one terrified glance at Lorrain and then stop them with her hands. When she got on board she found Madame Sybil prostrate with terror and nervous exhaustion in the cabin.

"Have they done it?" she asked in a weak, trembling voice. "No," said her ladyship with a gesture of unutterable disgust, "but I think they're doing it. Ugh! It's too horrible to think about! I've got something better to tell you. The Señor and I think we have found a buried pirates' treasure. The men are going to dig it out to-day, so I hope we shall be able to give you a nice wedding-present."

It was on the tip of Madame Sybil's tongue to ask whether it was the Gold Magnet that had pointed the treasure out to them, but happily for her she had self-control enough to keep from speaking the fatal words, for if she had once shown her ladyship that she knew the secret she would have been sharing Don Gregorio's fate within an hour.

Lorrain came off with Captain Peters in the other boat shortly after, and news at once ran through the ship that the whereabouts of a buried treasure had been discovered. An expedition was at once organised and equipped with all the needful tools and blasting apparatus, and Lorrain led the men straight to the fissure, taking care to impress upon them the fact that it had been discovered entirely by Lady Pendril, who had consented to place her wonderful faculty at the disposal of himself and his companions.

The men were naturally a little incredulous at first, but when a couple of hours' work with pick and drill, and the explosion of a dynamite cartridge had shattered the rock floor at the end of the fissure and disclosed a black hole like the entrance to a tunnel, their doubts began to disappear, and when they went down with their torches and candles and found themselves in a great, rough-hewn vault, half natural and half artificial, with ingots of gold and silver piled high up the side and half-a-dozen iron bound oak-chests, which looked as if they had just come out of the treasure-room of an old Spanish plateship, stacked against the further end, they needed no more convincing, and they raised a shout which made the long-silent vault fill with dull echoes as though the ghosts of the old pirates were still guarding their treasure and resented the intrusion.

No time was lost in getting the precious contents of the cave out and transporting it to the beach, but although every man that could be spared from the yacht joined in the welcome task, it was sundown before the last of the chests was got on board the boat.

From Trinidad the *Circe* steered for Rio de Janeiro, and there, while she was filling her coal-bunkers, there was a quiet double wedding at the English church, in which Madame Sybil played her part with dignified resignation. She had been given to understand that any attempt to communicate with the authorities or to make a scene would lead to immediate and disastrous consequences. But this warning was really unnecessary, for she was well aware that any exposure must necessarily include revelations as to her own past which would certainly result in the loss of her liberty, if not of her life, and so she wisely elected to hold her tongue.

The voyage from Rio round the Horn was eventless, and as comfortable as the weather permitted. The *Circe* proved herself a splendid sea boat, and her powerful engines answered every call made on them without a hitch. She coaled again at Valparaiso, and here Captain Peters picked up a dozen men after his own heart, thoroughly hard cases who only needed just such an iron hand as his over them to go anywhere and do anything as long as gold and plenty of it was to be the reward either of working or fighting. Those of the black crew who were not considered to be of any further use were quietly shot one night when the *Circe* was well out to sea and dropped overboard, and the work of doing this was entrusted to the new hands by way of initiating them into the fellowship of crime which now held the *Circe's* company together.

Another call was made, at Callao, and six more picked scoundrels passed on board under the approving eyes of the Captain. This gave him a clear five-and-twenty men outside his stokers, engineers, and quartermasters. Lorrain had bought regular yachting sailors' outfits for all of them at Valparaiso and Callao, and no one to see them at muster would have thought them anything else than a thoroughly smart and respectable yacht's crew. Their numbers, it is true, would have looked a little suspicious, so too would their weapons could anyone have seen them when Captain Peters—who now thought himself no whit inferior to the commander of one of Uncle Sam's cruisers—was drilling them after notions of his own; but he took very good care that not more than a dozen or so should ever show themselves together on deck when the yacht was in port, and of course not a weapon was ever seen on board.

Several times during the northward passage the dynamite cannon and machine guns were had up and mounted for the men to practice at them in squads or gun-crews, and everything was done to make the *Circe* as formidable a fighting craft as possible against the coming struggle for the possession of the spoils of El Dorado in the North.

After touching at Callao and San Francisco, mainly for the purpose of keeping the men contented by letting them have a run ashore and of learning the news, the *Circe* steamed straight on to Seattle. At San Francisco, Lorrain was delighted to hear a full and particular, if not exactly true, account of the running fight between the *Minnehaha* and the three cruisers off Samana. The *Hermione* and the *Pocahontas* had been badly injured by the dynamite shells, but the *New York* had crippled the pirate yacht and enabled the *Pocahontas* to overtake her and blow her out of the water with her heavy guns, after which the three cruisers had got back to Kingston to refit—all of which, with a good deal of circumstantial and imaginative detail, was very pleasant reading indeed to the owner and captain of the *Circe*.

At Seattle, which was reached towards the end of March, Lorrain gave himself out as an English gentleman adventurer named Robinson, who had come out with a party of picked men in his own yacht to try his luck in the new gold fields. He explained to interviewers that the *Circe* was of very light draught, and he meant to take her right up the Yukon, if possible to Dawson City itself, and see if he couldn't bring her back loaded with gold.

This enabled him to lay in not only as much coal as he could cram into the yacht's hold, but also an ample stock of dynamite and other high explosives, without suspicion, and it further enabled him to get precise information as to the sailings of the different steamers which were to bring the winter's accumulation of gold down from St. Michaels at the mouth of the Yukon river. He had the routes carefully picked out on the best chart that money could buy, and over this he and Captain Peters put their heads together and decided on the most suitable places for lying in wait for the homeward bound treasure-ships. And thus in due course it came to pass that on the thirtieth of March the *Circe* steamed out of Puget Sound to make an unique name and place for herself in the annals of piracy.

(To be continued.)

THE DOG COLLAR.

A FEW years ago there lived in seclusion at 13, Rue Fabert, an old major, whom the urchins of the esplanade of Les Invalides had surnamed "Major Zouzou." Everybody in the district knew Major Zouzou, a good-looking old man, who had been decorated with the military medal and the cross of the Legion of Honour for his valuable services on the battlefields of Italy in 1859, and Lorrain in 1870.

For four years the old officer had lived alone with his dog, which responded to the name of Zouzou; hence the surname given to the master.

Somewhat of a cur, Zouzou was part shepherd dog, and part hunter. From the hunting dog he had inherited long ears and searching eyes, and from his shepherd ancestor, he had a shaggy coat and a long tail, ending in a large tuft, which afforded great amusement to the urchins.

Zouzou was a vagabond by nature, and liked to take walks by himself, and one often saw him walking along in a haphazard way, his nose to the wind.

In the morning by sunrise he would come downstairs with a basket hung round his neck. He would then trot off to see the baker, who, being accustomed to his daily visit, would put into the basket a penny roll, which was to go with the chocolate for the Major's breakfast.

From there he would go to a newsagent's in the vicinity, and they would give him a morning paper. Then, triumphant, the sagacious animal would bring the things to his master.

The Major was passionately fond of his dog; he brought to mind many fond memories. It was his daughter, his dearly loved child, who had fed Zouzou with a spoon and watched over him with loving kindness. Now the child was dead and the old man was left alone with Zouzou.

And often in the evening when the dog slept, the old fellow would ask himself what would become of Zouzou if he were taken away.

"Never mind, my friend," he always said, "I will leave enough to care for you. Rest assured, my good Zouzou, your master will never forget you."

A year rolled by. Zouzou became smarter. Every day the Major would brush him and clasp round his neck a magnificent collar, which he had given him at the New Year, for he always gave Zouzou a New Year's gift.

Every New Year's day he would take Zouzou for a walk on the boulevards and show him the pastry shops.

But to-day the old man was too old, too much broken down to go so far; so he had given Zouzou a beautiful brand new collar, fastened with an elegant nickel-plated padlock. On the collar was engraved these words:

MY NAME IS ZOZOU.
I Live at No. 13 Rue Fabert.

The Major fell ill. Zouzou alone remained with him. Sitting on a chair near his master's bed, he never left

him for a minute, mingling his plaintive barks with the sighs of the sick man.

Then the Major died. And after the burial the caretaker closed the rooms of the deceased, and chased Zouzou away with a broomstick. But the affectionate dog would not go away; he would lie day and night on the pavement opposite the house which his master had occupied.

The caretaker would throw buckets of water over him and the children would throw stones at him; but Zouzou never moved. He would lie there as though hypnotised near the house where his master died and from where, he, perhaps, hoped to see him appear.

Several days later there arrived from the provinces some nephews of the Major, who hastened to divide amongst themselves the furniture, linen and other objects of value left by the old man. On seeing the windows, whence his master had so often called him, being opened, Zouzou made one bound, and, notwithstanding the concierge who tried to prevent it, he flew up the two flights of stairs and leapt joyously into the room of the old soldier.

"Look, there's his dirty old dog!" said one nephew, giving the animal a kick. Then Zouzou descended the stairs mournfully and went away. And no one ever saw him again in that part of the town. His vagabond life recommenced. Every day he walked on straight before him, without purpose, his nose to the wind.

The winter came on; for two days the snow fell continuously, and Paris put on a white veil. What thoughts were then passing through poor Zouzou's mind?

Several times he started in the direction of Pere Lachaise, where his master was buried—he knew it; but he was always chased away by the caretakers. Then, worn out by fatigue, dying of hunger, he stretched himself out by a high wall, as though decided to die there.

The hours passed slowly and wearily. Several times policemen went by without noticing the poor black head emerging from the ermine mantle. One hurrying couple noticed him.

"What is that?" asked a woman's cheery voice, "look, Henry." The workman—for this late passer-by wore a workingman's costume—stopped, and that he might see better, put down his little girl of three or four years, whom he had been carrying.

"Don't you see that it is a dog?" said the young man.

"Oh, the poor creature," said Clotilde; "if we took it with us—shall we? Poor brute!" exclaimed Clotilde. "We can't leave him there, can we, Henry? See, he has on a collar; he has probably got lost; to-morrow we can return him to his master." Then she added smilingly: "And perhaps we may get a reward."

"If we take this dog home I am afraid they will put us out," objected her husband.

It was in the house of this honest labourer that Zouzou was that evening installed before a good coke fire.

"Quick, Fifine, some milk; give me the jug; we will get him warmed up," said the delighted Clotilde.

"Look, Henry, how pretty he is; what good, intelligent eyes he has! Surely we will get a reward to-morrow."

"The dog is a nuisance, and I fear we shall be obliged to keep him," said Henry; "but if you do not find the owner, take him to the pound and then all will be over."

Clotilde did not respond, but Fifine, the spoilt child, clung to Zouzou and began already to defend him. The child remembered how Zouzou had taken to her and she wished to keep him.

"She will have an attack of the nerves if you take the dog away from her," said Clotilde. And that evening there was a family feud, even in that humble dwelling. The workman reproached himself with having allowed his wife to bring home this dog, who seemed to promise to give them many disagreements.

Clotilde was sulky, but knowing how kind-hearted her husband was, she did not worry much about Zouzou's fate. "To-morrow he will be the first to want to keep him," thought she, and as to sending him to the pound, she would never hear of that—never!

The next day Clotilde and Fifine took poor Zouzou to Rue Fabert. The concierge was at the door of the house. Perceiving the dog she exclaimed loudly. "Oh, the horrid thing!" she cried. "Why did you bring him back to us, madam?"

"But," said Clotilde, "the dog belongs to someone in the house."

"To an old major who has recently died," replied the concierge. "You may keep the horrid creature; we want no more of him here!"

"Very well, madam, I will keep him," replied the young woman gently; "we are already very fond of him. Come, Zouzou; come my good dog."

In the evening, when Henry returned and found Zouzou lying near the fire, he frowned.

"It's decided that we keep him," said his wife. "He belonged to an old soldier who has just died. Have pity on him, my dear Henry."

Zouzou's nature seemed to change; he never went out alone now. Sometimes, in the heavy heat of the summer, when it was almost suffocating in the home of the workman, he would glance longingly toward the Boulevard Diderot and the green trees where the birds were singing. And Fifine, understanding what was passing in his heart would say to him:

"Be patient. On Sunday we will go into the woods at Vincennes and have such a good time, and I will throw stones for you to bring back to me."

Then Zouzou would bark joyously.

Years passed like this, years of perfect happiness. But happiness is, they say, a bird of passage, who never remains for long in the nest he has chosen.

The workman fell ill, very ill. Clotilde, who adored her husband, would not allow him to be taken to the hospital till the very last moment. One by one, every piece of furniture in the modest little home was sold at a miserable price to second-hand dealers; then the linen, the little trifles, the souvenirs of happy days, everything went, little by little.

And when, after five months in the hospital, Henry was able to return to his home, he found a complete change. Misery had knocked at the door, destroying all happiness, and carrying off all their savings. Zouzou

had always had his share, caressed by Clotilde and Fifine; he had often wept with them for the absent one who was now returning convalescent.

"I shall go to work to-morrow," said Henry.

And so the next day he went to see his former employer, who engaged him for the day following. But, alas, the poor fellow had over-estimated his strength, and in a few days he was forced to keep to his bed again.

Three months rent were unpaid, and the landlord threatened pitilessly to turn them out.

"When people are as badly off as you, madam, they do not keep a dog to feed."

"That is true, but he was so unhappy," said Clotilde humbly.

And haughtily, with her head very high, Clotilde ascended the stairs to her apartments. But when she was in her own room she broke into sobs.

"What is it? Why do you cry?" asked her husband.

She related to him what had taken place. Then a bitter smile crossed the lips of the sick man. Seated near the window in an old invalid-chair, which had been saved in case of his illness returning, his limbs trembled under the heavy shawl which covered them; he remained silent for a long time, his eyes fixed on the almost purple sky.

Seated beside him was Zouzou, who looked at him intently, and the man's look was mingled with the tender look of the dog.

Henry's eyes suddenly assumed a coaxing expression; a smile crossed his lips, which were as white as wax. Zouzou, advancing, laid his head across the invalid's knees. Slowly the sick man laid his hand on the animal's head. A nail in the collar pricked him and brought a little cry to his lips.

"This collar is in a bad state," said he to Clotilde.

"It hurts poor Zouzou; it just now gave me a scratch. Try to find a key to open the padlock. You shan't be bothered with the old thing any longer, Zouzou."

Then he added:

"It will be a nice little amusement for me to do up your collar and make you beautiful, my old dog."

The next day Clotilde borrowed a collection of keys from a locksmith; the padlock was opened and the collar fell off.

For a few minutes Henry examined it to see exactly what had to be done; he turned it over and over in his hands. The leather was much worn in several places, and through the holes could be seen a dirty white paper.

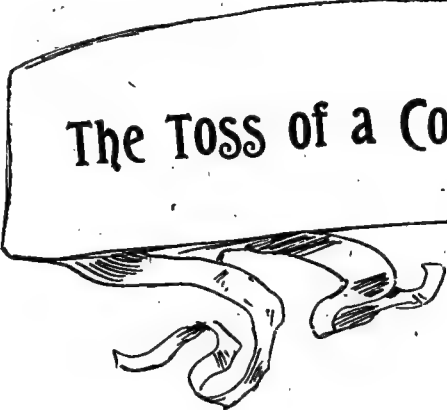
"Papers," said he; "what can that mean?"

Slowly he tore off the leather, and a roll which had taken the form of Zouzou's collar fell off. From this roll fell ten bills of a thousand francs each. On the paper which had enveloped these bills was written:

"To the charitable person who shall take pity on Zouzou I leave my modest savings."

Zouzou's inheritance made them very happy, and joy has once more returned to their home. Zouzou is the master there; he sits on a chair and eats at the table, patiently waiting until he is served.

MAXIM LAUZARRE.



The Toss of a Coin.



"MARIE," I began awkwardly, for I had never proposed before, "you must know—you must have seen for a long time that—that—I love you."

Marie said nothing, but sat looking down at her hands, which were twisting a bit of lace that she called a handkerchief. She was smiling before I began. She now looked distressed.

I do not like to see Marie look distressed, for she then looks as if she were going to cry. And a crying woman is not pretty. So for the minute I laid aside my own affair to comfort Marie.

"Marie," I began, venturing with much trepidation to lay my hand softly upon both of hers, "what's the matter?"

She looked up. Her lips were quivering, and a tear, balanced for the start, stood in each eye.

"I don't know what to do," she whispered brokenly.

"Well?" I said inquiringly, inviting her to continue.

She hesitated nervously for several seconds. Then she went on almost inaudibly.

"You see, Mr. Transome told me last night what you told me just now."

"Confound Transome!" I said to myself; and to Marie: "Well, Philip Transome is a fine fellow, you know."

"Of course," said Marie, acquiescing a little too readily, I thought.

"And he's good looking."

"Yes."

"And rich."

"Yes."

This itemising a rival's good points to comfort the woman you love, is rather straining on one's generosity.

It isn't so bad if the woman rewards your generosity, as of course, she should. But Marie didn't. So I stopped.

"Well, where's the trouble, then?" I asked, at length.

"I don't know what to do," she replied, repeating her former wail.

I began to see. It is hard to decide between two lovers. I could sympathise with Marie, for I had once been in a similar predicament myself.

"You don't know which of us to take?" I suggested, after a minute or two of silence, attempting to put some sympathy into my voice.

Marie did not notice the sympathy. She merely looked uncomfortable at this bald statement of the difficulty. But she did not deny it.

"You like me, don't you?" I ventured with some fear in my heart.

Marie nodded. I felt very complacent.

"And you like Philip Transome?" I continued.

She nodded a second time. I believe I swore at Transome again.

"But you can't decide between us. Is that it?"

"That's it," acknowledged Marie weakly.

"You have tried every way?"

"I have, and I can't"—here Marie blushed, but it was a blush I did not like, because it was for Transome as much as it was for me—"and I can't tell which of you I like the better."

The person who sits in the seat of the undecided sits not easily. This I knew. And any decision is better than no decision. This also I knew. So out of the sympathy which I had for Marie I made up my mind to help

her to arrive at some decision, even though I lost by it. But I did not intend losing if I could help it.

I thought for a long time, but nothing came. Then I looked up at Marie. Her eyes were fixed expectantly on me, as though she had instinctively learnt of my intention to help her and was awaiting my plan.

"Well," said I, seizing on an idea that just then popped into my head, "since you have tried all other ways, suppose you toss up for us?"

"What!" exclaimed Marie, half starting from her chair.

"Toss up for us," I repeated calmly.

Marie shrank back in her chair and gazed at me in amazement.

Marie's surprise at my suggestion angered me somewhat. Of course, I can understand that choosing a husband in such a way may seem a little queer to some girls. But they needn't act as though it were unnatural. Besides, there are worse ways.

"Toss up for you!" Marie managed to gasp out at length.

"Certainly," I replied with some asperity. "Have you anything better to suggest?"

A reluctant "No" came from Marie.

"You'd better toss up, then," I said decisively, drawing a shilling from one of my pockets and offering it to her.

She took it and gazed at it for a long time. I began to grow impatient, for the coin was like any other of its kind, and I could see no reason why she should study it. Then I saw that her look was the look of one who is thinking. Suddenly she raised her head and gazed steadily at me. And then a smile that I liked strangely well slowly came into her eyes.

"No; you do it," she said, returning the coin. "I don't know how."

We both stood up. "Heads, it is Transome; tails, it is I?" I suggested briefly.

Marie nodded.

I balanced the coin on my first finger. I felt sure of the result, for the man never lived who is as lucky as I am. I even began to pity poor Transome. But before this feeling had much opportunity to grow I flipped the shilling whirling into the air, and, as it struck the floor, placed my foot upon it.

I looked at Marie. "Which shall it be?" I asked softly.

"You," she whispered.

I slipped my foot aside and we both stooped. The head of Her Gracious Majesty was uppermost.

It was Transome.

We both straightened up. I looked at Marie and Marie looked at me. She was pale, and I could not have been otherwise. I had risked all on the turn of a coin—and it had turned the wrong way. Without a word, for I was not wise in the ways of women, I walked out of the room, secured my hat in the hall, and started to open the door and go out into the street.

As my hand was turning the knob something touched my arm. I turned and looked round. There stood Marie, with a little smile—a little beseeching smile—on her face.

"Dick," she whispered, and then was silent. I still held on to the door knob.

"Dick," this time the smile was still more beseeching—"can't you see? It's—it's you."

I saw, and my hand left the door knob. And in the little excitement that followed I also may have kissed Marie. Such things have happened.

WALLACE MAYNE.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

There is no confessor like unto Death!—LONGFELLOW.

MRS. ALADROS was met by a strange doctor, who gave her a brief account of the accident and spoke seriously of José's condition.

"Yours was the only name he mentioned, but if he has any relations they should be sent for at once."

"I know of none," said Meresia; "his parents lived in Madrid, but I cannot say if they are still alive, nor yet tell you their address. I will go to him at once if I may. Will you take me to his room?"

The doctor looked curiously at the pale, beautiful woman. Her face interested him, and he wondered in what relation she stood to Serano. Was it a mere sentimental friendship or something deeper, that had made the dying man call her name repeatedly, in evident anxiety, and stress of mind?

The room of suffering was dimly lighted by candles, for the brightness of electricity hurt José's eyes. He was lying propped up by pillows, with his head bandaged, but that was for a mere cut the doctor had explained to Meresia, his critical condition was due to internal injuries of a most dangerous character.

A second doctor stood by the bed, and looked up as Mrs. Aladros entered, motioning her to advance quietly.

She crept to José's side and took his hand, which lay limply upon the sheet. The coldness of it startled her—it was like the hand of Death.

He turned his head with difficulty and met her eyes.

"Are we alone?" he murmured.

The doctors exchanged glances, and taking the hint, withdrew accordingly.

"Yes, now we are alone," she answered softly in the lowest tones of the golden voice. "Are you in great pain?"

"Yes," he said, "great pain, but it's—it's about those papers. You have locked them away in a safe place?"

"Yes, the key is in my pocket now. They are quite secure."

"I have something more to explain to you," he went on feebly, "before you go to Madrid. I cannot tell you now, for my head is weak. It goes round and round, and aches horribly. I can't move. I think the wheels crushed me, but it is so difficult to remember."

"There is nothing that need worry you," she said gently, as a mother might soothe a fretful child. "I will see to everything, and guard the packet well. We will talk about it when you are better."

He closed his eyes, and murmured something in Spanish.

"You can't understand the papers," he said, and she gathered he was quoting the contents. "They call me their saviour, those poor wretches, the avenger of their assassins. Oh! God! that hell on earth! Do you hear

the cries? Aladros has sent him to the upper room, the room of torture and misery! Now the hangman has got hold of him. The screams! the screams! Take me away, for mercy's sake! I thought I should never hear it again, and the sound of the whip cutting through the air! For pity's sake stop it, abominable devils! And the irons have come back too, the red hot irons, and the gag! I can't bear it now, the sight, the sound, the horror, is killing me!"

He rolled over on his side, and great drops of sweat broke out on his forehead.

Meresia tried to comfort him, and the touch of her cool hand calmed his fear, and drove the dream away.

"I thought I was back in the prison," he whispered; "it's weakness, don't leave me, I've no other woman, no one to stay."

His words brought the hot tears to Meresia's eyes, an intense pity stirred in her heart. She forgot her anger against Serano, she remembered only that he was dying and needed her; for a woman that is enough.

The disjointed fragments of his ghastly vision brought up before her all the spectres of the past. Her husband's massive figure loomed through the shadows round the bed, smiling cynically. She gave it one long defiant look, before which it vanished. Surely it was a fitting end that Aladros, the unjust, the merciless, should have died by violence!

As she had listened to the burning truths from Serano's lips, any remorse that reaction stirred in Meresia met a final doom. Triumph, conquest, pride asserted themselves once more. Aladros was dead—she and José had killed Aladros!

He lay for a while without speaking. The doctors came back into the room, looked at him, and went away again. They could do nothing, and Meresia expressed a wish to watch alone.

She forgot the enormity of her sin and his—forgot the bitter suffering, the fear, the unrest, the remorse, the long agonising hours of meditation, the sting left behind, the reproof of conscience.

José lay sleeping now like a little child, and Meresia knelt down and prayed over him. Her prayers were not for deliverance from impending perdition; they were rather the words of one strong in faith, commending a blameless soul to the overwhelming love of a great and merciful God. She seemed to discern—though sin was mighty, death terrible, Satan subtle, and the grave gloomy—a way of escape, an opening out, embodying to her perception, and proving to her satisfaction the reality of those things which the ear cannot hear, nor the eye see.

She knelt as one in adoration, with lips parted, and eyes bright with the fever of her vision; and who shall say that she was wrong; who shall condemn her, or cast the first stone?

It may be that at the last the great sins will appear small, and the little, selfish, mean, contemptible ones magnify themselves into mountains of ruin to crush the fallen to dust.

The upshot of the whole is that no man can guess, tell, say, or judge, since none have "tasted the powers of the world to come."

As Meresia knelt with face upraised, and hands clasped, the door was pushed gently open, and someone entered the room noiselessly. She neither heard nor moved, but the man started back amazed, and held his breath.

Bad news travels apace; but Herbert Brockbank had not expected to find Meresia with José Serano. His emotions all but overmastered him as he saw her there. He could neither think nor reason, but watched her with a dead, stunned feeling, that came from love, pity, and jealousy together.

He dare not retreat for fear of disturbing the sleeping man, nor could he speak to Meresia, for the whispered words that rose to his throat choked themselves in utterance. So he stood—just where he had entered—clothed in shadow, an unseen spectator of the praying woman and the unconscious man.

A bitterness such as life had never brought to him before rankled now in his soul. A stranger—apart—in the actual presence of the woman he loved with heart and body, mind and spirit, having no right to be near her, no place in her thoughts. He felt a traitor to look, to make her his own in imagination, to lull his pain by picturing her returning the love she had that very day rejected.

There was something of the expression in her face now that he had seen on the first day, when all that was good and strong in him went out to Meresia in silent sympathy—something of the soft sweetness of the spring.

Why had it come back at this awful moment, when one, who, a few hours ago, was full of life, strength, vigour, lay at the point of death, under the sword of the destroying angel?

Herbert Brockbank could not say, nor did he seek to discover, for the room was full of mystery, and nothing could be restricted within the narrow limits of reason.

Presently a low moan came from the pillows. Meresia started up, as one waking from a dream. She bent over José to catch his words.

"Are you there?" he asked.

"Yes, I will stay; don't be afraid, you shall not be left alone."

"I have found out what is going to happen," he continued; "Aunt Harriet came just now and told me. She looked very sad and thin, and as white as when I saw her in her coffin. She said I was going to die."

His voice trembled so that the words were hardly audible, and Meresia could see that his whole body shook under the bed clothes as if from intense cold, or great fear.

"Should you be frightened to die?" she murmured softly.

He groaned aloud.

"You ask me that? You, Meresia Aladros! How can I die in peace with this sin on my soul? God will not let it go unpunished, not such a sin as mine! He turns the wicked into Hell, there is nothing for me but everlasting destruction."

He shivered again, alarmed by a sense of his imminent peril.

"I thought just now," said Meresia, "that I looked into Heaven. It was not the Heaven we had pictured to us in childhood, no golden streets, no angels in white, but, oh! such a great, such a wonderful beauty, yet all divinely human with the Man-God; the Truth, the Life, waiting to pardon those who believed in His Love."

"Listen," said José, "I want to tell you—I—I—"

He paused for breath.

"Yes," she answered.

"I was a Protestant once—then—in Madrid, I changed my faith. I went over to Rome. After that, I lost touch

with everything, it all seemed very weak—falling to pieces I let the rules and the services slide. I still believed in God, but I neglected the Saints—the Holy Mother. I doubted, I wavered, I was not a true Catholic. For a whole year I have not confessed; but there may still be time, time to do something, time to confess—I'm frightened. I dare not die without a priest; I must make my last confession. It may go better with me afterwards; it may reconcile the outraged Saints, the neglected Mother of God. I have plenty of money for Masses, they may save me from purgatory's worst pains. Oh! go quickly—quickly—before it is too late!"

His voice rose, he spoke with extraordinary power, and tried to push her from him. Meresia turned to do his bidding, half ran across the room towards the door, and stumbled against Herbert Brockbank with a little cry of terror.

The moment she saw his face her fear subsided. Instinctively she turned to him for advice and help.

"I heard he was ill, and I came at once," said Herbert Brockbank. "I have been here some minutes, but you did not see me."

"Where can we find a priest?" she asked.

"Stay, he is calling you back," said the man, pointing to the bed.

José was beckoning and trying to speak. Herbert Brockbank went quickly to his side, but Serano's eyes had no light of recognition in them. He feebly clutched at Brockbank's sleeve, and poured forth his story in disjointed sentences.

"Father," he gasped, "Father, I have a confession to make!"

"Come away," cried Meresia, a sudden dread seizing her, "he thinks you are the priest!"

"Let him, poor fellow; he is dying, there is no time to send. Let him die in peace."

"Oh! no, no!" gasped Meresia, frantic with terror.

But Herbert Brockbank was bending over José, who continued his speaking with extraordinary strength, the strength that comes at the last to some. "Father, I sinned, I was tempted, I fell! Aladros, Alfonso Aladros—deserved to die, so I thought, so she thought—his wife! His abominable sins were cruelty—injustice—God knows the rest. I have plotted against the State—I have helped the Anarchists in Spain to escape their torment. I gave that woman Meresia poison—poison for Aladros. We killed him, and then I made use of her—I gave her papers to take to Madrid. She was furiously angry—indignant, but I showed her no pity. I cowed her with threats like a villain—her—a woman! Then I was brought home ill—injured, and she came—stayed with me—said no word of reproach. If she could forgive me, surely the good God—He must forgive—He will not be outdone by a woman!"

Meresia fell on her knees, and buried her face in her hands. She let her head sink down—down to the very floor in an attitude of abject humiliation! As the whole truth flashed across Herbert Brockbank—his emotions became suddenly subdued and controlled, as is often the case in a great emergency. He realised the meaning of Meresia's distracted protest—the horror of the moment for her—all the agony of mind she had suffered, and was suffering.

José was gazing fixedly at Brockbank, as if waiting to hear his fate.

An unseen power came to Herbert's aid, and guided his actions. Raising his hand he solemnly—reverently made the sign of the cross before the failing eyes of his dying friend. Then he spoke in a voice new and strange:

"My son, thy sins are forgiven thee—rest in peace!"

José's lips parted, he looked with great wonder and awakening happiness into far reaching space. He tried to speak, but the failing breath could make neither sound nor utterance, and into eternal silence he passed from the temporary hush of this present world.

For a moment Brockbank stood over the body of José

Serano, then he turned, and raised Meresia from the ground.

Her face was ashen pale—as white as the face of Serano—her eyes widely opened, looked fearfully from the dead to the living man, as, convicted of her crime, she waited for the worst.

In her helplessness and misery she appeared even more beautiful than when she basked in the smiling light of a spring afternoon. Her appealing expression touched the man to the core, he held her in his arms and felt her trembling, but for his support she must have fallen.

"This is retribution," she said, and the sweetness of her low, passionate voice thrilled his soul. "What shall you do?"

He lifted her face to his own, and looked into it long and searchingly. Her colour came and went under his burning gaze. Self-condemning words broke forth:

"It was true—all true! Put me away! Do you realise what I have done?"

She struggled half-heartedly to free herself from the comforting clasp—that felt as if it were holding her from the world and from judgment.

But the love that was stronger than all these things retained the treasure it had sought—the love before which sin, mistake, nay, crime—red-handed—waned to insignificance!

He wanted the woman just as she was—murderess or angel. This was Meresia—the thing he craved, the being he had seen, and instantly adored—the half of himself which God had placed in the world and withheld until now!

So love conquered with supreme sovereignty, love swept out the dark passages of the past, the bitterness, the gall—love a law unto itself—answered Meresia with the wordless assurance of meeting lips, which pressed her own, and sealed the secret of their lives.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"LET ALL BE WELL—BE WELL."

It was the day after Serano's death, and Meresia had thought long and earnestly over the fate of José's papers.

The night before, in her excitement, she had half decided to take them to Madrid—to fulfil her mission—but with morning light she saw the folly and danger of this proceeding.

She must consider not only herself, but the true, loyal man who, knowing everything, loved her none the less. Ah! loved her, if possible, more for what she had endured.

Needless to repeat all that passed between them after they left the house of death.

Herbert Brockbank brought her home and listened to the confused story of her life, as in full confidence she eagerly unfolded chapter upon chapter to his wondering ears.

At last she could speak out her whole mind; tell everything to a breathing, living, kindred spirit, who understood her motives and her actions, and could bear to hear them without shrinking, without reproach.

It was like the rushing forth of a pent up river, a sudden outlet and escape from martyrdom and agony—the breaking of the awful silence as the flood-gates of her soul opened, as she took the stranger into the recesses of her heart. So the mutual unburdening of their love must be closed to the merciless eye of the world. Only those who have known love in its strongest form—the love that braves all—meets all fearlessly, and stands like a firm rock amidst the billows of the sea—can picture one half of Meresia's joy as she realised this man's devotion!

Now, in the quietude of her room, she crossed to a desk and unlocked a drawer.

Unhesitatingly she drew the sealed packet, addressed in José's handwriting, from its resting place. What terror this same envelope had once instilled in her brain, and now she was master of it completely; it could no longer unnerve or frighten her!

She gazed at the writing tenderly, for all her thoughts of José, now, were kind. She was grateful to him for his dying confession; glad that he had proved Herbert's love by forcing the knowledge of her crime upon him.

Then, reclosing the drawer, she took the packet in both hands, and crossed to the fire, which burnt brightly as if in defiance of the spring sunshine. Kneeling on the hearthrug, Meresia bent forward and thrust the papers, unopened, into the very heart of the blaze. They writhed defiantly, and as the fire burnt upon them, the writing seemed to rise as if lettered in gold, and the last to fade was the word—Madrid!

"The past is dead!" said Meresia; "thank God! thank God!"

She knelt between the trembling shadows and the sunlight—the shadows full of farewells and mournings for sin—the sun bright as the dawning of a new day, warm and golden, flooding every corner of the room.

The door opened, and Elizabeth announced herself:

"My dear Meresia, what a smell of burning! Old letters?"

"Only some useless papers—documents of no account. You see this little black heap? How unimportant it looks! Once it was thought a good deal of, but now its day is over."

Meresia stirred the charred leaves with the poker, and finally crushed them under the coal.

"I was so shocked to hear the dreadful news this morning," said Elizabeth, "of poor Dr. Serano's accident and death. What a loss he will be!"

"Yes; he was very good to some people."

"And yet," continued Elizabeth, "he leaves no one quite near to mourn him—no wife or child."

"He hadn't time for women," said Meresia; "his family was large and far reaching—he called it Humanity. I wonder if people are really happy who never marry!"

"I am happy," said Elizabeth.

"Are you quite—quite—sure of that? You have put so much away which the world wanted to give—you have mistrusted love?"

"Yes, Meresia. But you married, and were not happy."

"I made my own tragedy, remember. I sowed the clouds and reaped the rain. Now I am going to sow sunshine, and wait for another harvest. Put your arms round me, Elizabeth; hold me very tight; tell me there is such a thing as pure, strong, perfect love, and passion—not of the mere common, earthly kind. The love that is very God, the love that is purity itself, the love that is self-sacrifice—the devotion of a strong man for a weak woman, whose life has been marred by folly and mistake. If I told you I had found all this suddenly—unexpectedly—would you believe me?"

"Yes," replied Elizabeth. "But I should say you had been more fortunate than most women!"

THE END.

What a Penny Can Do.

On February 19th, a penny will purchase what a penny has never been able to purchase before. For this one coin you will get a copy of *Home Notes*, a shilling novel, and a coloured plate.

"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT FOR CURING CORPULENCY.

The process of curing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of "delightful" that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's now popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of letters included in the just issued 18th edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages, "Corpulency, and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.) These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a wonderful record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address three penny stamps for a copy (post-free) of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive little book. "I think the treatment most delightful," writes one out of a large number of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions "Admirable tonic," "Splendid stuff," "A delicious beverage mixed with mineral waters," are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the results of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. It must certainly be delightful to experience the sensation of losing unnecessary and dangerous fat by pounds per week, and frequently stones per month, and that by the aid of treatment which simultaneously increases the appetite and renders its reasonable indulgence innocuous. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge, which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of the mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. With a candour which also is delightful, Mr. Russell prints in his book the recipe for the preparation.

The following are extracts from other Journals:

GOOD NEWS FOR STOUT PERSONS.

It is a matter for congratulation that obesity is taking its proper place as a disease, and is receiving that scientific attention which it has long lacked. It does not follow that a person need to be the size of Sir John Falstaff to show that he is unhealthily fat. According to a person's height so should his weight correspond, and this standard has been prepared by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Bedford Square, London, W.C., so that anyone can see at a glance whether or no he is too stout. People in the past have been wont to regard fatness as constitutional, and something to be laughed at rather than to be prescribed for seriously; but this is evidently an error, as persons whose mode of life has caused a certain excess of flesh require treat-

ing for the cause of that excess, not by merely stopping further increase, but by removing the cause itself. It is astonishing how long we go on perpetuating error, and how difficult it is to make people disbelieve anything, no matter how palpably false the principle if it has become at all firmly fixed in the public mind. These facts with regard to obesity, however, are so obvious that there ought to be no difficulty about their acceptance when once they become known; and, as a matter of fact, the immense number of persons who have already acknowledged their truth by recording the benefits received from Mr. Russell's treatment is simply wonderful. It is marvellous how this "Pasten" and "Koch" of English discoverers can actually reduce as much as 14lb. in seven days with a simple herbal remedy. His book (256 pages) only costs 3d., post free and he is quite willing to afford all information to those sending as above. It is really worth reading.—*Southport Visitor*.

CORPULENCY THE THIEF OF TIME.

That procrastination is the Thief of Time is a truism so obvious that it has no claim to be regarded as an epigram. To more practical purpose it may be urged that Corpulency is, in very many cases, the parent of procrastination. The putting off till to-morrow what can be done to-day certainly becomes a mental habit, but it is unquestionably very frequently begotten by physical conditions which render exertion irksome. That in the majority of cases procrastination is easily curable is one of the considerations suggested by a perusal of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure," the remarkable popularity of which is evidenced by the recent issue of the 18th edition. The enormous mass of correspondence which this expert has accumulated, and many extracts from which are included in the 256 pages of this little book, forms the most valuable addition which has yet been made to the literature of obesity. It is specially notable that a very large proportion of Mr. Russell's correspondents who have undergone his course of treatment for the reduction of obesity emphasise the renewed vigour which they have experienced after passing through the process—a wonderfully rapid one, according to this method—of banishing their superabundant fat. The universal adoption of Mr. Russell's system by corpulent persons of both sexes would increase, by a stupendous percentage, the working capacity of mankind. The rapidly-growing popularity of the treatment is due, doubtless, to the author having discarded all the obsolete notions about semi-starvation being requisite to ensure comely and comfortable slinness. It is certain that the more the marvellous possibilities of Mr. Russell's system become known, the less will be the tolerance for the laziness of people who decline to reduce their overweight by the pleasant and facile means which are described in this little book, which can be had, post free, by forwarding three penny stamps to Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Liverpool Daily Mercury*.

SHORT TRUTHS.

WANTED BY THE PUBLISHER, any numbers of *Short Stories* published previous to July, 1898. Sixpence each will be given for clean and perfect copies.

G. R.—The proportion of men and women in France is more equal than in any other country in the world, there being 1,007 women to every 1,000 men.

P. P.—It is perfectly true that the Lord Mayor, during his term of office, takes preference of every subject within the jurisdiction of London. Even the Prince of Wales is not an exception.

ANTI-SMOKER.—Railway companies are compelled to attach smoking-carriages to every train of more than one carriage of each class. The compulsion dates from 1868, and is enjoined by a clause in the Railway Regulations Act of that year.

II. K.—There are twenty-seven Royal families in Europe, two-thirds of which are of German origin.

Q. W. asks: "Which the easiest language to think in?"

Whichever language happens to be the one a man knows best, of course; thus English would be the easiest for an Englishman to think in, French for a Frenchman, German for a German, and so on. However, given a man with a complete knowledge of any number of languages, he would naturally choose the language which has the widest range of vocabulary, and which was capable of expressing the most subtle shades of meaning, and that is English.

D. S. asks: "Which body of dissenters from the established Church of England is best represented in Parliament in proportion to its size?"—The Quakers. There are only 18,000 of them in Great Britain, and they are represented in the House of Commons by eight members.

G. W.—Canada supplies about one-fourteenth of the imported food of Great Britain.

J. T. wants to know if there is any advantage derived from the sea containing salt.——Certainly there is. If it were not for the salts of the ocean, the whole sea would become a mere mass of corruption, owing to the decay of the organic matter it contains.

M. C.—In no country is the Government more strict than in Germany. If a foreigner wishes to remain in a town for a few days he must take his passport to the police, with a sixpenny piece; he will then receive a permit-card allowing him to stay for another six months. No German may leave the country unless he can show that he has done the military service required of him, and there is no free Press as we know it.

A. D. G.—Green is the colour most beneficial to the eye in diffused light, and reds and pinks the most harmful. In a strong direct light, however, blue and neutral tints are the best for the eyes, and pure white the most harmful, as is proved by the phenomena snow blindness.

B. A. B.—The "Upper Ten" includes about 14,000 persons.

H. C.—It really does not matter in the least whether you talk of coming "up to London" from Northumberland, or "down to London." As a rule, in every country it is usual to speak of going up to the capital, whether it is situated in the North or South, and that is why people in your part of the world talk of coming "up to London."

W. F. K.—Madame Albani is a Canadian. Her real name was La Jeunesse, and she adopted the professional name of Albani from that of her birthplace, Albany. She is now married to a Mr. Gye.

E. L.—Only the best of the London fire engines can pump 500 gallons a minute, whereas some of the steamers in use in towns like Liverpool and Manchester are equal to 1,500 and 1,800 gallons a minute.

ALPHA.—It is as unusual for a member of the learned societies to use the letters after his name as it is for a man to sign himself "Mr." or "Esquire," unless he is writing on a subject connected with the society's work.

BOB.—It is not at all surprising that your friend looked "huffy," as you call it, when you told him he was looking "seedy." To look "seedy" is to have a shabby exterior, and the best thing for you to do would be to apologise to your friend, and explain to him that what you meant to convey was that he was not looking quite so well in health as usual.

I AM constantly receiving complaints from readers who say that they are occasionally unable to obtain *Short Stories*, for the reason that their newsagent had none left. It should be remembered that most newsagents only lay in sufficient stock to meet their actual orders, and the only safe way to secure a copy is to order it to be regularly supplied.

W. A. N. comes along with the question "Which human characteristic do animals most markedly manifest?"

——Jealousy. Animals are most sensitive to any preference or favour shown to other animals. I have known a cat sulk for the rest of its days simply because another cat was introduced into the same household. The reason for this strange, persistent jealousy is because the selfish instincts of the lower animals have not been subdued and brought under the controlling influences which shape the moral characters of human beings.

T. W.—A cable's length is one-tenth of a nautical mile (6,080ft.). The longest mile is the Norwegian, which is within a fraction of seven times ours.

G. D.—I do not see that there is anything strange in the fact that if a person fans himself in a room, the temperature of which is higher than that of his body, his temperature will become hotter instead of cooler. The object of a fan is to cause the air to pass over the face and take with it some of the superfluous heat, but if the air that is passed over the face is hotter than the face itself, it is obvious that it would have anything but a cooling effect.

W. B.—The oldest paper in the world is the *Kin Pan* of Pekin. For nearly a thousand years it has been published regularly, first as a monthly, up to the year 1361, when it became a weekly, and for the last ninety years as a daily.

S. R.—Sultana does not mean the wife of a sultan, but is the title given to his mother, sisters, and daughters.

W. P. C. asks: "How is it that froth or foam will form on the top of some liquids and not on others?"

Only diluted liquids will foam. Frothing is not possible with a liquid of pure constitution. Thus pure water and pure alcohol will neither of them foam, but a mixture of water with but 5 per cent. of alcohol will foam strongly. Water impregnated with camphor will foam freely, and a little soap added to water will have the same effect.

O. S.—The little white spots which sometimes appear on the finger nails are due to some subtle action of the blood, upon which all the bones, sinews, muscles, and organs in the body are dependent for nutrition. They sometimes disappear of their own accord; but there is no known cure. In reality, they signify no derangement of the system.

W. E. M.—Yes, there are several varieties of fish that cannot swim. In every instance they are deep-sea dwellers, and crawl about the rocks, using their tails and fins as legs.

R. C.—The only Englishman who ever ruled as Pope was Nicholas Break-spear, who was born about the year 1100 at Langley, near St. Albans. He was unanimously elected for the Papal chair in 1154, and bore the title of Adrian IV.

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LONGEST ESTABLISHED, PUREST & BEST.

ZEBRA
Grate Polish.
In Packets or as a Paste in Tins.